



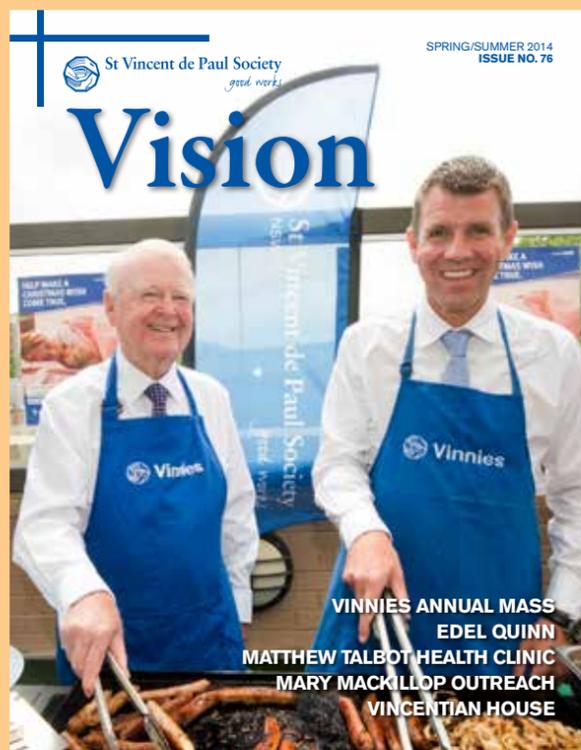
St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Vision



**VINNIES ANNUAL MASS
EDEL QUINN**

**MATTHEW TALBOT HEALTH CLINIC
MARY MACKILLOP OUTREACH
VINCENTIAN HOUSE**



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

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that I present you with Spring/Summer edition of Vision. A publication where we can share the stories of our Society and more importantly those of the people we assist.

You will read some powerful stories about the change we deliver through many of our services. Over 175 years ago, a young twenty year old student named Frederic Ozanam saw poverty all around him in post revolution Paris and decided to do something about it. With some friends, they pooled their money and bought a widow some fire wood. This first small gesture has since become a worldwide movement of over one million members in 149 countries who follow in Frederic's footsteps every day, lending the hand of support whenever and wherever it is needed.

We should be proud that we continue his legacy today. In the past year we assisted over 400,000 people and our members have undertaken more than 220,000 visitations in people's homes, hospitals, prisons, detention centres and nursing homes.

We are progressing with the delivery of our Strategic Plan which was launched in 2012. It is becoming more and

more obvious that the Plan is being embraced across the Society and by working together, we have been able to meet the majority of our targets.

At this very special time of year, when we are surrounded by family and friends and often the comforts of life, I am reminded of Pope Francis' previous message about Christmas when he said, "On this day illumined by the Gospel hope which springs from the humble stable of Bethlehem, I invoke the Christmas gift of joy and peace upon all: upon children and the elderly, upon young people and families, the poor and the marginalized. May Jesus, who was born for us, console all those afflicted by illness and suffering; may he sustain those who devote themselves to serving our brothers and sisters who are most in need."

I hope you and your family shared a blessed, holy and safe Christmas. We take this time of the year to remember the birth of Christ. I thank each of you for your selfless commitment to the Society.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Reynolds,
President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

CEO'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,

As the year draws to an end, I reflect on the many great achievements of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW over the past year. The work of our 5,000 members in over 400 communities across the state

makes a real impact on the lives of the nearly 900,000 people living below the poverty line in NSW.

As the organisation continues to focus on social justice advocacy, we have shared some great successes.

This year we have spoken out strongly on the need to address housing affordability, the need to look at the elements of the Federal Budget that would place more pressure on people experiencing disadvantage and the injustice of keeping refugee children in detention.

Other work of significance in 2014 includes state-wide membership recruitment and retention work; the delivery of the Ability Links program in the Hunter region and more recently in the southern metropolitan region of Sydney; the continuation of the very successful Vinnies CEO Sleepout which raised \$5.4 nationally; and the implementation of a new Client Service Delivery Model for our homeless services which will deliver much better outcomes for the people we assist.

I look forward to 2015 and the continued work of members, volunteers and employees with the end aim of making a difference to the lives of those doing it tough.

I hope that you and your family had a blessed and happy Christmas, and wish you a happy New Year.

Michael Perusco
Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

VINNIES ANNUAL MASS 2014

The Society celebrated its Annual Mass in December at St Marys Cathedral, Sydney. The mass was attended by around 300 Society members, volunteers, supporters and staff and was celebrated by Bishop Terence Brady, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney.

Children from the St Marys Primary School, North Sydney choir filled the Cathedral with beautiful and solemn hymns.

During the mass Ray Reynolds, St Vincent de Paul Society State Council President, took the opportunity to reflect upon the past year and to offer thanks for all the gifts we have received from our Lord during the year.

Mr Reynolds spoke about the legacy of the Society's founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and the Society's founder in Australia Charles Gordon O'Neill.

"We should be proud that we have made a real difference to the lives of so many people, who may otherwise have no one else to turn to. In this past year we assisted over 400,000 people and our members have undertaken more than 220,000 visitations in people's homes, hospitals, prisons, detention centres and nursing homes. Last year we also provided 822,509 meals and 257,287 bed nights to people turning to us for assistance," said Mr Reynolds.

He concluded by saying, "Our Society has much to be proud of and the work we have undertaken throughout our history and today makes a real difference in the lives of so many of the community's most vulnerable people."



Children from Our Lady of Fatma, Kingsgrove with Bishop Terence Brady



Bishop Terence Brady, Ms Beverley Kerr and Mr Ray Reynolds

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF GOOD WORKS IN WOLLONGONG



The St Vincent de Paul Society's Wollongong Central Council celebrated 90 years of good works with a commemorative mass at St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Wollongong in September, coinciding with the Feast Day of St Vincent de Paul.

From humble beginnings in 1924, the St Vincent de Paul Society Wollongong Central Council has grown to over 3100 members and volunteers, providing over \$1.5million worth of assistance to more than 46,000 people experiencing disadvantage in the region each year. Following the mass, members and volunteers were invited to attend lunch at the Xavier Conference Centre where 13 Vincentians were presented with beautiful plaques recognising decades of service to the Society and the Wollongong community.



RURAL ASSISTANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Rural Assistance Advisory Committee provided \$12,500 in fuel to support the Burrumbuttock to Bourke Hay Run. With this support, the group was able to help over 750 farmers and truck 8000 large squares and rolls. An additional 19 trucks went to Brewarrina and Weilmoringle area where 70 farmers received 10 bales of hay each for their stock. The assistance provided by the Rural Assistance Advisory Committee will make a huge difference to the lives of many struggling rural families.

IN MEMORIAM: DENNIS O'NEILL

Long-time Vincentian Dennis O'Neill from the West Wollongong Conference sadly passed away in October after a long battle with illness.

Dennis was a Vincentian for 53 years and was recognised at the Central Council's 90 year celebrations. Due to ill health Dennis was unable to attend the Festival Mass. Wollongong Central Council President Denis Walsh presented a plaque to Dennis in the presence of his wife Pat and daughter Margaret at the Port Kembla Palliative Care Unit. He died the following evening and his family had the plaque placed upon his coffin. Dennis will be remembered as a great Vincentian who cared greatly for his community.



Dennis O'Neill and his wife Pat



VINNIES MEMBERS MARCH PROUDLY IN KANDOS

The Society was well represented in the Kandos Parade Centenary celebrations with Society members and volunteers marching with the Vinnies float. The St Vincent de Paul Society is a significant part of the small Central West community of Kandos. Kandos Conference President Carol Morrissey said that participating in the parade for the first time was a great way to mark the Society's 85th active year in Kandos.

VINNIES ROADTRIP

On a road trip with her husband, Deniliquin Vinnies Shop volunteer Pam Howlett called on her fellow Vinnies volunteers in Cobar, Bourke and Lightning Ridge to help out in creating holiday postcards. Pam got photos at each of the stores and wrote messages on the back to send to her fellow volunteers back in Deniliquin. Pam said that the Deniliquin volunteers enjoyed learning about the other Vinnies stores around the state. Pam also took up the advice from her new friends in Bourke by 'throwing out a challenge' each day that she worked.

"Thank you to everyone, what a wonderful organisation we work in," said Pam.





VINNIES MEMBERS RAISE MONEY FOR ROZELLE FIRE VICTIMS

After the devastating fire that destroyed a Rozelle apartment block and tragically claimed three lives, the members of the Rozelle Conference raised \$2500 for the Leichhardt Mayors Rozelle Fire Appeal to support people in the community affected by the tragedy.

WILCANNIA/FORBES PRESIDENT COMMISSIONING

Jim Rogers was commissioned as the new President of the Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council in Parkes after Vince Toohey completed his term as president.

A number of Parkes members and volunteers then joined the Central Council members and staff for a celebration dinner at the Coachman Motel. Kelly Morgan, Executive Officer Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council said, "It was a lovely occasion, providing a great opportunity for members to catch up and for new friendships to be formed."



Jim Rogers at his commissioning

HUNTER HOMELESS CONNECT DAY

Society members from the Hunter Region supported the Hunter Homeless Community Connect Day.

Throughout the day, 56 hairdressers cut 389 people's hair, 500 blankets were issued, 80 massages were provided, 500 care packs were distributed, 89 birth certificates supplied and approximately 4000 servings of food shared. Participants sought assistance from health workers, government departments, counselling & many other crucial support services.

Lorraine McGuigan, Mayfield Conference President said, "Some people just took the opportunity to access the showers and clean clothing, or to have a coffee and chat. It was an incredibly uplifting day for all and we look forward to contributing again in 2015."



TO PARIS WITH LOVE

Michelle Brown, Lavender Bay Conference member was fortunate enough to visit the International Office of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Paris, France.

Michelle said that the staff were very welcoming and that the friends she made through the visit invited her to the theatre and to a photographic exhibition.

"I was also invited to dinner at a home near the Eiffel Tower and visited Lourdes. I stayed with the Notre-Dame De Fidelite Sisters whose convent was walking distance to the station and St Bernadette's shrine."



Rosemary Fisher and the Armidale Central Council Board

ARMIDALE CENTRAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMISSIONING

Rosemary Fisher was commissioned as the new President of the Armidale Central Council along with the Armidale Central Council Board. The commissioning mass was presided over by Bishop Michael Kennedy at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Joseph, Armidale.

Rosemary joined the St Vincent de Paul Society 34 years ago and is still currently a member of the Tamworth Care and Support Conference. Rosemary has a background in nursing and has been involved in many different areas of the Society including disaster relief, Vinnies Centres and work, health and safety.

80 YEARS OF SERVICE AT ST KEVIN'S CONFERENCE

St Kevin's Conference in Cardiff is celebrating 80 years of good works assisting people experiencing disadvantage in the local community. The core work of the Conference is home and hospital visitation supporting people living in a number of different circumstances including many who are seriously ill. The Conference is blessed with the services of Sr. Angela Conroy of the Lochinvar Sisters of St. Joseph who comes regularly to minister to the group. Over the years, Conference members have taken on many roles



including Twinning Coordinator, Compeer volunteering and working at Regional and Central Council level positions.

NORTH SYDNEY COMMUNITY GROUP OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The North Sydney Community Group of the Year was awarded to the Society's Crows Nest Ladies Auxiliary, who for over 31 years has made in excess of 12,500 doonas and baby clothes. The doonas and clothing have been sent to Africa, Papua New Guinea and rural NSW, to refugee families in Sydney and wherever around the world it is needed.

Sr Georgette Rolland said of the group, "They are a wonderful service to the community, which largely goes unnoticed year after year, but it makes such a crucial difference to people's lives."

The award was presented by The Honourable Joe Hockey, Member for North Sydney and Melissa Doyle, Channel Seven News presenter.



Melissa Doyle, Sr Georgette Rolland and The Hon. Joe Hockey.

THANK YOU KERRY MUIR

After four years, Kerry Muir has come to the end of his presidency in the Armidale Central Council. During his time as President, Kerry was involved in a number of committees including State Centres Committee and Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Kerry joined the Society 41 years ago and in this time has held numerous roles and continues to be active in his local Glen Innes Conference. Thank you Kerry for your hard work and continued dedication.



A NEW LIFE

For many women escaping an abusive relationship, the main motivation for leaving is to protect their children. Caught in a volatile and frightening world, children are often the silent sufferers of domestic and family violence. For Amanda, giving her daughter Olivia a chance at a better life without the violence and fear was paramount.

After leaving her partner, Amanda found herself without a home, a job or anywhere to turn. She found temporary solutions at refuges or by staying with family or friends but eventually found herself with nowhere to live.

Amanda explains that it was at this time she was referred to the St Vincent de Paul Society by a friend.

"It really helped a lot and if I am honest I could have come here almost every week and asked for some sort of help, but I never actually did. It was always the Client Support Officer, Rhonda, asking if I was ok for food, if I needed anything," says Amanda.

Amanda says that having someone to turn to was crucial as she didn't have family or friends that she could lean on for support.

After spending some time at a Society women and children's service, Amanda and Olivia eventually moved into a small studio apartment, where they have finally found some stability.

"We are in a place where we can stay, we don't have this person in our life that is being abusive, we don't have that stuff going on. Now you have to stop and face all of your problems and you have to start feeling it all and dealing with it and it is really difficult," says Amanda.

Amanda explains that now that she is feeling better about herself, she is focusing on getting Olivia to a happier place.

Olivia has been seeing a psychologist and has also been attending the Buddies program run by the Society; something which Amanda says has been of enormous help to her daughter.

"They have been really great, always taking her to places that I can't afford to take her, so to Luna Park, the zoo, movies, so many different activities. She looks forward to going. She knows a couple of the kids that go regularly and there are always a few familiar faces. Just knowing some of the people there is enough for her," says Amanda.

Despite all that she has seen and the issues she faces each day, Amanda explains that her daughter is empathetic and appreciative of what she does have.

"She misses out on a lot, just because of our situation but she is just so appreciative. I will get her a book and she is so thankful because she understands that Mummy doesn't have money for that," says Amanda.

Olivia has been experiencing a few problems at school and is struggling to keep up with her school work. She has been diagnosed with a hearing problem that has caused her great setbacks with her reading and writing.

The Society has offered to accompany Amanda to interviews at Olivia's school to try and develop a plan for Olivia that will help her settle both socially and educationally.

Despite all of the hurdles that Amanda and her daughter are yet to overcome, they have come a long way and are starting to turn the corner.

"I've always said that one day, when I am out of it all, I really want to help other people. I really do. I would do Rhonda's job. I know exactly what it is like. I have been there, done that, been through it all."

IN MEMORIAM: JOAN BARNET

How do you honour the memory of someone whose generosity of spirit made a positive difference during their lifetime to so many individuals and families?

Mrs Joan Barnet, late of Tamworth, passed away peacefully on Sunday 26 October 2014. Mrs Barnet was a kind, humble and longstanding supporter of the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society for over 20 years.

Thank you to Mrs Barnet, many women and children who sought shelter when their family homes were no longer safe, now have a safe place to live; individuals who were lost, have now found their way; and people who were without food, a place to sleep or medical attention, can access all of these.

Mrs Barnet was inspiring and encouraging and always humbly supporting the work of the Society in the background. She was compassionate and believed that one person could truly make a difference.

Her memory will live on through all of the people who we are able to assist when they turn to us for help.



The Society would like to welcome the new State Council Spiritual Advisor, Leo Tucker.

Leo replaces outgoing Advisor, Bill Johnston, who retired from the Society after years of wonderful service. We wish Bill good luck on his new adventures and warmly welcome Leo to the Vinnies fold.

Leo is an experienced senior executive working in the areas of pastoral care, spirituality, mission and welfare in healthcare, community care and parish settings.

Before coming to this role he held the position of National Director of Mission for Calvary Health Care, a Catholic health, aged and community care provider across Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and NSW. Prior to this Leo was the Regional Manager Pastoral and Chaplaincy Services for St Vincent's and Mater Health Sydney.

Leo has a strong Vinnies background as he worked for the St Vincent de Paul Society as Regional Centres Manager and later as the Program Manager within the Maryfields Day Recovery Centre for the Wollongong Central Council. He also worked in the Regional Centre of St Vincent de Paul Society in Penrith assisting in the warehouse and distribution and volunteered in times of bushfire relief.

Leo holds a Bachelor of Theology from the Catholic Institute of Sydney, Advanced Diploma of Business Management from University of New England and Graduate Certificate in Applied Ethics and Graduate Certificate in Catholic Culture and Leadership from the Australian Catholic University.

Leo is married to Anne and has two teenage age children, Madeleine and Ben.



SOCIAL ADVOCACY JOIN US IN 2015

As we look back on 2014 we can be proud of the actions we have taken to speak up for justice. Our social justice network has grown tremendously, with over 100 members taking up the role of Social Justice Representative in their Central Council, Regions and Conferences.

Members across the state are bringing Strategic Goal 6 to life by:

- raising community awareness through local events;
- speaking with their local MP;
- gathering stories from the front line; and
- forming social justice groups to advocate on local issues.

Highlights from 2014 include:

- 1.** Our State Social Justice Forum in April brought together over 120 members to discuss Affordable Housing options and took part in a practical advocacy session with how to engage your local politician.
- 2.** The Society presented our recommendations to the State Parliamentary Inquiry into Social and Affordable Housing.
- 3.** The Society launched a state wide campaign in response to the Federal Budget which included proposals which would hit people experiencing disadvantage the hardest. Members in electorates across the state wrote to and visited Federal MPs and many more signed our online petition.

- 4.** The Society hosted our annual Rosalie Rendu Lecture which this year, focused on the changes taking place in our NSW energy market, what positive outcomes exist and what we can do to protect vulnerable customers.

Next year we will launch the Society's new Social Justice Statements, a strong message on what it is the Society stands for and a great tool to assist us in engaging and advocating with members of parliament.

The upcoming state election in March 2015 presents us with an opportunity to advocate with the State Government on a number of issues including affordable housing. Our Social Justice Statements and submission to the government's Rebuilding NSW Strategy, which we lodged in September, provide us with a strong foundation to take action in the coming months.

To help us be better connected, we are in the midst of launching our new Social Justice Facebook Group, which will give you access to the latest news on social justice events, Society campaigns and topical media stories.

The Social Justice Committee invites you to join us and be a part of this exciting journey in 2015! You can contact your Central Council's Social Justice Representative, ask for a copy of the Society's new Social Justice Statement and sign up to our Society's new Facebook Social Justice Group.

For more information you can also contact our Social Justice Coordinator at State Support Office, Lukas Rajnoch on 9568 0279 or at lukas.rajnoch@vinnies.org.au

ENCOUNTERING THAILAND



Vincentians from around NSW went on a Thailand Encounter trip to visit local projects. The Encounter aims to deepen the relationship between Australia and Thailand through the Vinnies twinning project, a program that provides financial, material and spiritual support from local Conferences to those overseas.

Matthew Kirkham, Encounter Thailand Group Leader and State Council Vice President said that the trip was the experience of a lifetime.

"We were welcomed into the world of remarkable Vincentians who lived the Gospel in the works they do in a developing nation. The appreciation of the resources we have at our fingertips in our wonderful nation hit home when travelling amongst some of the poorest areas of the world in Thailand."

"Travelling across Thailand, the consistent message and Vincentian spirit was evident throughout," said Matthew.

Jasmin Ryan from Lismore Central Council believes the Encounter was one of the most amazing and challenging adventures she has been on.

"You hear of poverty and how bad it can get in parts of the world but it wasn't until I stepped foot into a developing country that I realised how little people can have, yet how grateful they are," said Jasmin.

What surprised Jasmin was the positive journey of spiritual and self-discovery she encountered.

"I feel like it was God's way of telling me that maybe my faith isn't in going to church every week, but my faith is through my actions."

"I feel blessed that I was given the chance to be a part of such an adventure and I look forward to sharing my reflections with the rest of the world and especially my Vincentian family," she said.

To find out more about the Society's international work please visit www.vinnies.org.au/International_Impact



BOB'S BAG-O-RAGS

Lismore Central Council is expanding the Matthew Talbot Clothing and Recycling Centre in Goonellabah by purchasing the Rob's Bag-o-Rag business in Arundel, Queensland. This will now allow the Society to supply cloth to a variety of businesses in northern New South Wales and Queensland.

HUNTERS HILL CONFERENCE ON NIGHT PATROL

The Hunters Hill Conference had a wonderful and eye opening experience volunteering with the Sydney Night Patrol Van. The group reflected that it was a humbling experience and that they learnt a lot about the issue of homelessness and the circumstances that can lead people to homelessness. Lisa Croucher from the Conference said that, "The love exchanged on the night was simple and pure."



CELEBRATING COMPEER IN THE ILLAWARRA

Compeer Friends in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region attended a mental health celebration for Mental Health Month in Wollongong Mall in early October to mark the 2014 theme "BE YOUUnique". The day was attended by many Illawarra mental health services and also featured the "Walk of Pride", honouring people living with a mental illness. The event was opened by Fay Jackson, Deputy Commissioner NSW Mental Health with entertainment and activities enjoyed by all.

VOLUNTEERING BEST PRACTICE

Melissa Green from the MAVE team joined 1,000 volunteer workers from more than 40 countries as she attended the 23rd World Volunteer Conference to learn more about best practice volunteer approaches.

Guest speakers included keynote speaker Honourable Michael Kirby; Dong Hun Lee, from the Seoul Volunteer Centre in Korea; Jody Broun from Red Cross NSW and National Congress of Australia First People; and Brett Williamson OAM, CEO Volunteering Australia.

One key message that was repeated throughout the Conference was that volunteering makes for a civil society and where a country is stable and economically successful, you will find a very strong volunteering culture.

VINCENTIAN HOUSE VOLUNTEERS

Vincentian House provides accommodation and case management to families and single women experiencing homelessness.

Volunteers play a vital role in Vincentian House's work to meet the diverse needs of residents, as well as others experiencing disadvantage who are living in the local community.

As a sign of true appreciation, Vincentian House nominated a teacher and student volunteer group from a local school, St Vincent's College for the Volunteer Team of the Year Award 2014. The group have been volunteering since 2011 with weekly homework help for young residents and they currently facilitate a weekly cooking class. Their volunteering not only provides positive role-modelling, it also provides opportunities for the young residents to socialise and have fun.

Also nominated by Vincentian House were Beaumont Consulting for Job Club, boosting job-seeker skills in creating resumes; Thomas Geer, Public Interest Advocacy Centre's Homeless Persons Legal Service clinic who provide free legal advice and court support; and Genworth and Royal Bank of Canada who assist with the KEEP education program.

Many other dedicated individuals contribute their skills to Vincentian House volunteering their time with cooking classes, English classes, parenting classes and child minding.

"We would not be able to provide the level of support for people who are experiencing disadvantage without the assistance of volunteers. They are integral to our work in shaping a more just and compassionate community and we salute their contribution," said a Vincentian House staffer.



INSPIRATIONAL TRAINING

Jan Speers from the Prospect Region of the Parramatta Central Council participated in the Vinnies Advocacy Workshop run by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) 2014. Jan came away feeling inspired and ready to begin the role of Social Justice Officer.



"As Vincentians, we have always been working for social justice in a quiet and unassuming way but it is now time to raise our voice. If you are interested in social justice and are not sure about taking that first step, I strongly recommend the PIAC course," said Jan.

WILCANNIA/FORBES SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

A new Social Justice Committee was formed in the Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council in July 2014 covering five regions and more than 50% of NSW. Social Justice Representatives in each region will be working to advocate on the key issues affecting people in the region including the lack of services in the area, distance and travel time required to access services, and the plight of the farming community. Social Justice Representative, Michael Lynch said, "One of the difficulties associated with the issues facing people out west is that they remain hidden until it is too late."

ROSALIE RENDU LECTURE

The annual Rosalie Rendu Lecture was held at the University of Sydney featuring a lecture by Clare Petre, the NSW Energy Ombudsman. During her address Ms. Petre highlighted the great changes to the energy sector in the past 20 years and explained that the current structures in place do little to support the most vulnerable people in our community.

In recent years we have seen significant increases in electricity prices and the reality is that people living on low incomes have little flexibility to change consumption rates via lifestyle changes.

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) 2014 Poverty Report found that 1 in 8 Australians had missed an electricity payment because they could not afford it. Over the last 5 years in NSW, disconnection rates have steadily increased and in 2013 alone there were 24,900 disconnections.

During the panel discussion, Jonathan Kennedy, Head of Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs at Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (IPA), explained that the NSW Government is planning to lease the NSW "poles and wires" unlocking a potential \$20 billion for infrastructure investment.

Mr Kennedy also explained that looking at Victoria and South Australia, leasing the network actually

substantially reduced the network costs, therefore reducing network charges on energy bills. Between 1996 and 2013 the NSW Government operated network costs increased by 122% compared to non-government owned network costs in Victoria and South Australia which decreased by 18% and 17% respectively.

Ms Petre said that in the future, technology would help consumers with flexible payment options, find out real time energy information and research more competitive deals.

St Vincent de Paul Society members listening to the discussion panel stressed that the people who need the most assistance tend to not be in a position to engage with the positive changes in the market. The lecture reinforced to members how important it is for them to understand the energy market and relay this information to the people they assist.



HELPING EARLY LEARNING AT ST JOSEPH'S WORKSHOP



St Joseph's Workshop in Gosford has been working with Aboriginal education group Gunawirra to help pre-schoolers in Aboriginal communities get an early start with education. Volunteers from the workshop designed, made and painted colourful and durable wooden teaching aids with Aboriginal designs to help children to learn at play.

Conference President Bruce Dent said that it's a great way to teach children about shape, texture and co-ordination. The teachers were so impressed with the teaching aids they ordered a further 200 to be produced to be able to reach more young children.

CONTEMPLATION AND SPIRITUALITY ON THE NORTH COAST

The Northern Region of the Lismore Central Council held a retreat for members and volunteers titled 'Making connections between scripture, serving the poor and Vincentian spirituality'. The retreat was led by the Central Council's Spiritual Advisor, Margaret Locker. The group were privileged to have Dr Caroline Thompson and Mieke Bell as keynote speakers who helped the group reflect on Vincentian work and why it is done.

Caroline led a reflection on the charism of both St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and challenged the group with scripture to reconnect with God's law of love; "love God and love others." Mieke shared her personal faith journey of twenty five years ministry with people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness.



LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL LEADERSHIP FORUM

Lismore Central Council held its second Leadership Forum in September in Grafton bringing together Conference Presidents and other leaders. The forum was an opportunity to share members' collective wisdom and experience to reinvigorate the service provided to the people that they assist. Throughout the day participants created a picture of what positive visitation looks like and used real life visitation experiences to discuss different responses and outcomes. Reflecting on the day Michael Timbrell, Executive Officer for Lismore Central Council said, "We need look at how we can work with people to provide a hand out and a hand up because if we can do both well, we will have a much greater impact on reducing disadvantage in NSW."

PHAN'S STORY

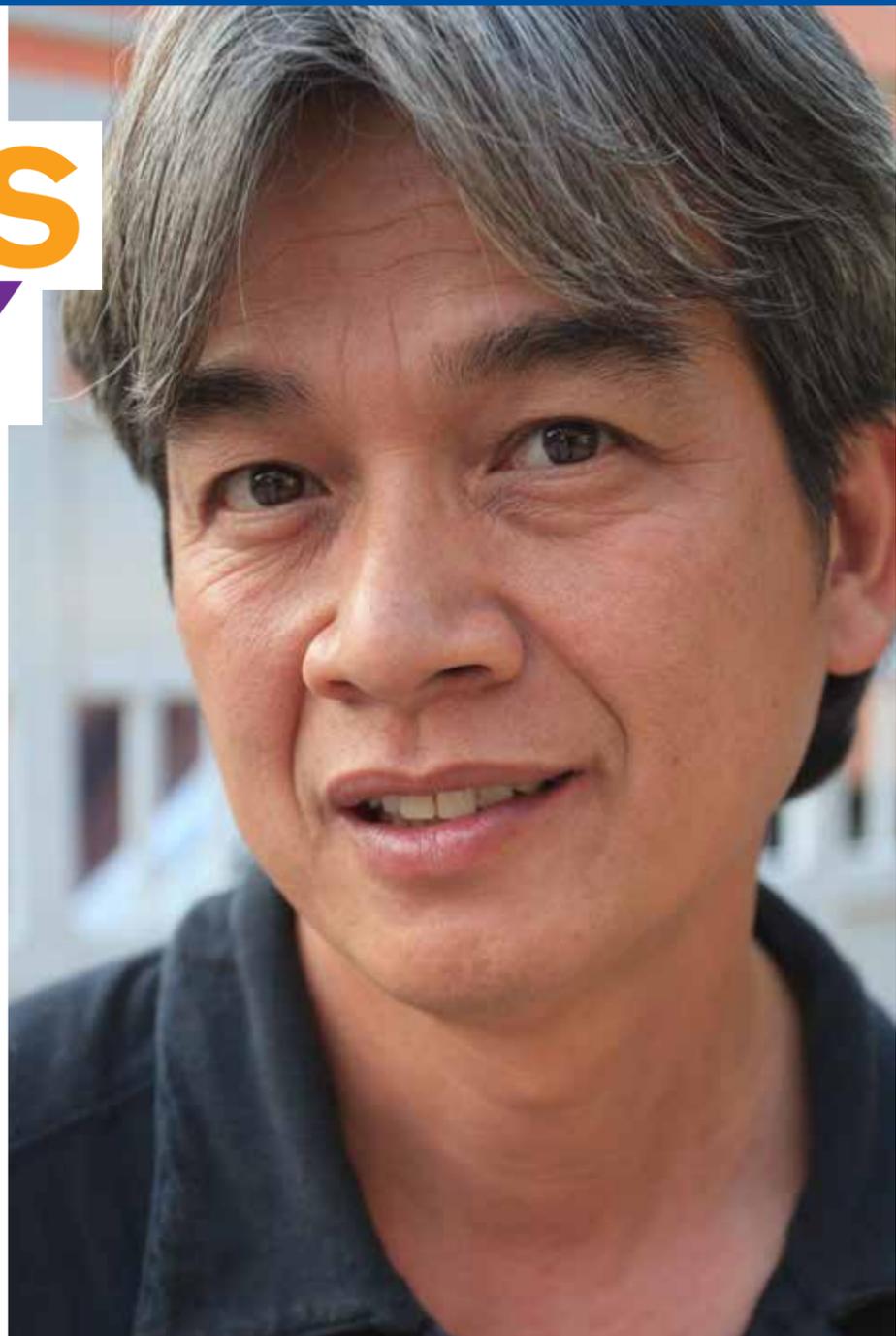
For over 30 years the nurse led Matthew Talbot Health Clinic has provided comprehensive primary healthcare service to men who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Clinic provides a range of health services to around 100 men each day. These services include medical, psychiatric, optometry, and podiatry care.

After Phan's marriage broke down he moved into an unlicensed boarding house until the landlord decided to sell, pushing Phan out onto the streets. Life became difficult for Phan and with no income and nowhere to store his medication; he stopped taking it all together.

With his physical condition deteriorating, Phan suffered two heart attacks and was referred to the Health Clinic by a local hospital that was worried for his wellbeing. Phan spent a long period of time in the sick bay where clinic staff managed his medication and diet and accompanied him to outpatient appointments to make sure that he understood the proceedings and outcomes of the visits. Staff connected Phan with the Metabolic Health, Heart Failure and Diabetic Clinics for more specific monitoring of his health problems.

Slowly, Phan's health began to improve. He began communicating with staff more openly, putting on weight and gaining a more positive outlook. With the help of Clinic staff, Phan started to take control of his medication, began managing his blood sugar testing and administering his own insulin.

Phan was achieving small milestones each day – small day trips out of the clinic, catching the train, going to doctor's



appointments on his own and buying his own food and clothes. Each small step gave him a greater sense of independence.

Phan has come a long way in a short time. With the right support from the Clinic and the Matthew Talbot Hostel and a great dose of self-determination, he is now living independently in community housing.

Phan's story is just one of the many transformations that the Matthew Talbot Health Clinic sees every day.



Since he was a child John has had a passion for art, finding inspiration in creating beautiful things. Living with an intellectual disability, John would escape into his art, finding a place to express himself freely.

Some years ago, John became involved with the art therapy program at Mary Mackillop Outreach (MMO), a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society that provides social, recreational and educational programs for people living with a mental illness and/or a disability.

Volunteers and staff quickly identified John's natural talents and began assisting him to develop his professional arts practice. John works across a variety of art mediums and often references his passions for dinosaurs and vehicles as well as many things from his personal world.

MMO Case Worker and Art Coordinator Vicki believes that John has one of the most prolific and imaginative minds at the Centre. She explains that John has a unique

unconventional frenetic style of drawing that produces distinctive vibrant artworks that are full of movement.

"When John first came to the Centre he would draw cars all the time. The teachers began to introduce new materials to him and now he creates all sorts of models, paintings, tapestries and even jewellery," says Vicki.

Last year John exhibited some of his art at the local Council run arts exhibition that gives artists with a disability the opportunity to showcase their work. From this exhibition John was awarded a \$1,500 mentorship at Sydney College of the Arts funded by Leichhardt Council in partnership with Sydney College of the Arts.

John works one on one with his mentor Justene for two hours a week and has been given the opportunity to work with new materials and attend mainstream art classes. John interacts with other art students who have shown a great interest in his artwork.



Ray Reynolds, Peter, Sir William Deane AC KBE QC and The Hon Mike Baird

PREMIER MIKE BAIRD LAUNCHES 2014 VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

NSW Premier, Mike Baird launched the St Vincent de Paul Society Christmas Appeal in November at a homeless service for families experiencing homelessness. The Premier was joined by Sir William Deane AC KBE QC, Patron of the St Vincent de Paul Society Support Services at a rooftop BBQ.

Premier Baird explained that whilst Christmas is a precious time for most of us, for some in our community it can be a difficult and lonely time.

"Vulnerable people and families may find themselves needing the most basic items - including food, money to pay the bills, food hampers and gifts for children. Or else

they just need a friendly face and a helping hand," said Premier Baird.

"Vinnies does a marvellous job reaching out to vulnerable people, all the year round, but especially at Christmas. The NSW Government is pleased to support the ongoing work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, and I am delighted to help launch the NSW Christmas Appeal.

Last Christmas the Society provided over \$3.7 million worth of assistance to people in need in New South Wales, including close to \$2 million worth of assistance with food, and \$1 million worth of assistance to help people cover energy bills.



LE MONTAGE DINNER

Le Montage, a Navarra Venue hosted a 5 star dining event for people experiencing disadvantage at St Augustine's Catholic Church Hall in Balmain.

The three course gourmet meal was provided free of charge to people living in the Inner West who are assisted by the Society. The night was a great success with many attendees commenting that it was an experience they will never forget.

The Society is thankful for the very generous support of Navarra Venues especially John Navarra for providing this once in a life time experience.

NILS GETS A FAIR GO

The Honourable Matthew Mason-Cox MP, Minister for Fair Trading visited the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) office to find out more about the program and present a cheque for \$13,265.00 to meet some of the operational costs for the program.



Denise Lucas, Hon Matthew Mason-Cox and Peter Fishlock

DICK SMITH FOODS CHARITY GIVEAWAY

The Society was fortunate enough to receive \$10,000 as part of the Dick Smith Foods Charity giveaway where \$1 million was donated to charities all around Australia. Thanks to Vinnies members, supporters, volunteers and staff who participated in the campaign by purchasing Dick Smith Food items, taking a photo and nominating the St Vincent de Paul Society online.

HILTON HOTELS

Hilton Hotel Sydney has renewed its sponsorship of the Sydney Archdiocese Central Council Sydney Night Patrol Van and the Hotels Have Hearts Gala Fundraising dinner from 2014-2017. The Hilton Hotel Sydney has also supported the Society since 2010 through corporate volunteering and joining Team Vinnies in the City2Surf. The Hilton Sydney City2Surf runners raised over \$15,000 for Team Vinnies.



THAT'S A WRAP

Lewrap held a Wrap the Homeless Day where \$1 from every wrap sold was donated to the Society in support of the Vinnies Winter Appeal which in total raised \$10,000. Thank you to all customers and staff of Lewrap for their support.



THANK YOU TO THE WIGGLES FOR KINDLY DONATING 4,000 WIGGLY T-SHIRTS TO THE SOCIETY WHICH WERE DISTRIBUTED TO CHILDREN THROUGHOUT OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AROUND NSW!



One of the Vinnies Gold Charity Runners

CITY2SURF

The City2Surf was a great success for Team Vinnies with over 50 people raising more than \$35,000 for Vinnies NSW. Jules Lund, 2Day FM Breakfast host and Vinnies City2Surf team ambassador was the first Gold Charity participant to cross the finish line in 62 minutes. Jules also shaved his hair off to raise \$1000 for Vinnies.

If you've been inspired by the wonderful efforts you can join Team Vinnies in 2015 by simply registering on www.city2surf.com.au and setting up your very own Supporter Page with team Vinnies here <https://city2surf2015.everydayhero.com/au/teamvinnies>



ABERGELDIE RENEWS SPONSORSHIP

Abergeldie has been a proud supporter of the Parramatta Central Council Night Patrol Van since 2008 and has recently renewed their sponsorship of the service for another three years. Mick Boyle, Managing Director of Abergeldie has also participated in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout since 2004 and, combined with their support of the Vinnies Van, has raised in excess of \$400,000 for the Society.



SHARE A SMILE WITH BEST&LESS AND THE WIGGLES

The Wiggles and Best&Less joined forces with the Society to gift a smile to someone in need at Christmas. Smile stickers can be purchased at Best&Less stores around the country for \$2 with proceeds going to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal. Thank you to Best&Less and the Wiggles for their support helping to make Christmas a happy time for everybody.



HISTORIC DONATION

Paul McGuinness, a long-time supporter of the Society recently donated several books and archive material to the Society's State Support Office at Lewisham. These items once belonged to his great uncle, Thomas Francis Hynes who passed away on 26 January 1988. Thomas Hynes was a member of St Columba's Conference at Leichhardt North for many years and had a significant impact on Paul's life. Paul fondly remembers his great uncle as a humble, compassionate man of strong character and strong faith. Some of the donated items are over 80 years old and were originally passed on to Paul when his great uncle passed away.

VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY SLEEPOUT

Around 85 people participated in the Vietnamese Catholic Community Sleepout which was held at Bass Hill raising over \$25,000. Tony Corkeron, Sydney Archdiocese Central Council President was a guest speaker on the night.

The Vietnamese Catholic Community has been a long term supporter of the Society raising a staggering \$165,000 in 2013 for the October Bushfire Appeal.



IGA COMMUNITY CHEST

IGA has once again partnered with the St Vincent de Paul Society through the Community Chest campaign. Sales of IGA Community Chest products have seen IGA raise over \$680,000 for the Vinnies Christmas Appeal over the past two years. These funds have assisted Vinnies to provide food and vital support to thousands of people living in poverty across Australia. Additionally IGA Australia is donating \$1 for every new Facebook like the IGA Australia Facebook page receives between 3rd and 31st December 2014 to the total of \$15,000. Thank you IGA Australia for your support.

CREATING POSITIVE FUTURES

For many people, the decision to leave an abusive relationship seems an easy one, but the reality is far more complex. After years of suffering at the hands of her partner, Karla made the brave decision to leave with her four children.

After leaving the family home, Karla struggled with her traumatic past and the pressures of being a single mum. As depression set in, she found it increasingly difficult to keep her children engaged at school. Reaching her lowest point and fearing for her children's future, Karla was handed a lifeline by Vincentian House.

Vincentian House located in inner city Sydney, specialises in supporting families, women and children who are experiencing homelessness. Through a dedicated team of support workers, case managers and visiting clinicians and specialised services, Vincentian House provides trauma based care to assist families get their lives back on track.

Understanding the trauma that Karla and her children had endured, Vincentian House staff focused on the individual needs of each family member providing them with the best social, financial, psychological and emotional support.

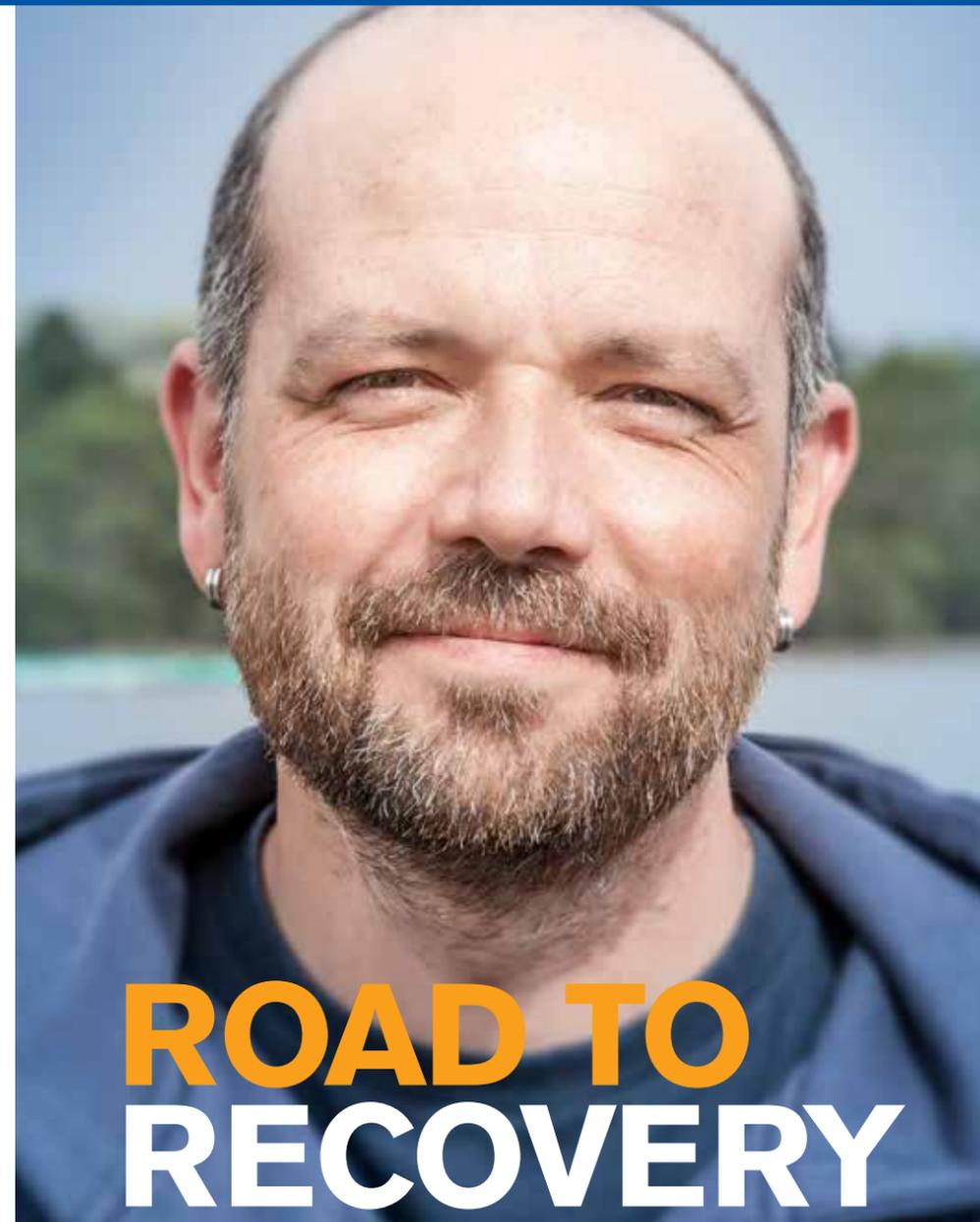
After extensive work and support from Vincentian House staff, Karla and her family eventually moved into transitional housing and then their own Housing NSW property. During this time the family continued to receive case management support from Vincentian House and were able to work on their longer term goals.

At Vincentian House, Karla participated in parenting skills workshops and received support for her mental health issues, employment support and financial counselling assistance. She also was given opportunities for specialised group counselling programs to deal with the demons of her violent past.

All four of Karla's children were involved with the Vincentian House Kids Engaged in Education Program (KEEP), which offers targeted support for children and young people who have experienced homelessness and trauma.

Education is a powerful tool in overcoming social disadvantage. The KEEP program provides opportunities for children to benefit from a meaningful and continued relationship with school and also linking them with new friends who have been through similar experiences. Karla's children also benefited from the Vincentian House tutoring and mentoring program. Caseworkers were able to link Karla's older children with a service that provides long-term mentoring and scholarships to provide school supplies such as laptops.

Karla is now doing a TAFE course to provide her with new skills and improve her chances of finding work.



ROAD TO RECOVERY

"I hadn't dealt with issues from my past and to open them was like opening Pandora's Box. Once you open it you can't shut it. The only way to shut it was through drink. I had to pretty much destroy myself to find myself," says Jason explaining his journey through homelessness.

Growing up with a father who was abusive and alcoholic, Jason never knew when his father would lash out next. His home life was volatile and Jason was constantly walking on egg shells.

Jason explains that his father was very temperamental and would randomly beat him or his mother. As he grew older, Jason isolated himself from others and refused to bring any friends home; afraid of what they might witness.

Unable to deal with his past, Jason turned to drugs and alcohol to deal with the pain.

Coming to the Matthew Talbot Hostel was the start of a long road for Jason. His road to recovery from alcoholism and mental health issues was a long and tough one. What kept him on track he says was the support of staff at the Talbot.

"Whenever I would relapse I would tell my case worker straight away. He helped me become more open as a person as I didn't want to hide anything from him. I generally don't get along with people as I've been alone for the last 20 years. I tend to do things myself but getting along with people at the Talbot has been essential for me to move on from this place. They have helped me and watched me grow as a person," says Jason.

Jason became involved with the music room at the Ozanam Learning Centre where he taught himself how to play guitar, something he describes as "life-changing".

"I began writing my own music and even got many of the music staff to jam along with me! Before, I used to think that if it was a nice day I would go down and have a few drinks in the park but now when I wake up and it's a nice day I'll go play some music. By the time I've finished

playing the music the thought of having a drink has gone," says Jason.

Through the Job Placement Centre, Jason was able to get a computer where he's able to write down all of his music as well as his poems and songs.

With a new confidence and strength, Jason has enrolled in a Carpentry and Joinery TAFE Certificate which he hopes will open up options for future employment.

"Thanks to the Talbot - they have motivated me to actually want to have a go and do things. This place is more than just a building. Without this place, I wouldn't be here."

For people like Jason, the Talbot can be the catalyst for turning their lives around.



UNLOCKING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

Our founder, Frederic Ozanam had a vision which is still inspirational in 2014. The young leaders of the Society are critical to the future growth and development of the organisation.

The Society has been engaging with members, volunteers and staff throughout NSW to hear their ideas about youth and leadership and how we help keep the Society strong and responsive now and for future generations.

Workshops are being held across NSW, engaging members, volunteers and employees of all ages from across the Society. These workshops look at defining what successful youth and young adult involvement looks like and how we utilise our experience, ideas and initiative to get there.

Workshops have been held around the state to learn how we can harness the existing leadership potential and use it to build future leadership within the Society. So far eight workshops have been held with three more planned for 2015.

These workshops are an opportunity to work together to strengthen our Society.

For more information please contact your Central Council Office or Sarah Lentern at the State Support Office on sarah.lentern@vinnies.org.au or 02 8622 0306.

USYD COMMUNITY SLEEPOUT

Students at the University of Sydney hosted their own Vinnies Community Sleepout in support of Vinnies. Guest speakers at the event included Glenda Stevens, CEO Homelessness Australia who enlightened over 70 participating students about the issue of homelessness.



NEWEST MINI VINNIES

St Patrick's Trundle in Parkes was excited to become official Mini Vinnies members earlier this year with Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council President Vince Toohey presenting their certificates. The group had a flying start organising a fundraiser for the Vinnies Winter Appeal.



PROJECT UPLIFT

In September, NSW Premier Mike Baird along with former NSW Premier Nathan Rees, Kirk Pengilly, Layne Beachley, Gail Kelly, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, Tim Pickles and Jock Cameron trekked 100km on the Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory with a group of young people including two assisted through Youth Reach in Brookvale, a Special Work of the Society.

Premier Baird was inspired by the stories of the young people who had experienced homelessness or disadvantage in their lives and wanted to be able to give them a unique opportunity.

Youth Reach Manager Rhonda Moore believes that by completing the challenging walk, the teenagers would learn that they have the strength to realise their full potential.



VINNIES ALBURY VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR



Eloise, Molly and Angela awarded for their work

The Young Adult Volunteers group from the Wagga Wagga Central Council was awarded the 2014 Riverina Region Volunteer Team of the Year as part of the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, an initiative of The Centre for Volunteering. The team then represented the Riverina region at the 2014 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards in Sydney. Congratulations to the group and thank you to all our young adult volunteers across the state. Every day thousands of youth and young adult members and volunteers live out the legacy and the grass roots work of the Society's 20 year old founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

GIVING FROM THE HEART

Each year in June, on the feast of The Sacred Heart, Mosman Sacred Heart School celebrate with a special mass for the schoolchildren, teachers and parents. The theme for this year was all you need is love, with each teacher and pupil sporting a red heart displaying an inspirational message.

At the end of mass, the school presented hampers to the altar where they are officially handed to the Society's Sydney Harbour North Conference. These wonderful hampers are then donated to the people in the Mosman and Beauty Point community who are doing it tough.

Behind these hampers is a huge effort from teachers, staff and parents alike. The collection of the hamper contents began with a request for the children to donate items of food and warm clothing. The response was amazing with 43 hampers compiled. The class mums put a final loving touch on the process by gathering together to assemble the hampers, wrap them in cellophane and decorate with a ribbon.

St Vincent de Paul Society member, Kathleen explains that whilst Society volunteers visit people in the community every day, the visit to deliver these beautiful gifts is the most special occasion of all.

"It is due to the generosity and kindness of the Sacred Heart community that we can bring such pleasure to the people we serve who are experiencing disadvantage," says Kathleen.



STUDENTS REBUILD FOR VINNIES

Year 2 students from Oxley College Bowral have been donating their time restoring old furniture to be donated to the St Vincent de Paul Society through the Bowral Conference. Oxley College community relations officers Emma Calver said "Our vision is for the students to support local, national and international communities and make a difference to the lives of others."



WILCANNIA/FORBES MINI VINNIES

Mini Vinnies throughout the Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council had a very busy year supporting the community. Activities included raising money for the Vinnies Winter Appeal; visiting aged care facilities; holding school liturgies; creating hampers; and raising awareness about a variety of important social justice issues including the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.



BELLINGEN MINI VINNIES

Congratulations to St Mary's Primary School Bellingen Mini Vinnies who had their commissioning ceremony at a school mass in November. The Mini Vinnies group work with the St Vincent de Paul Society of Bellingen to reach out to help people in need in their local community.

Yvonne Wynen, Conference President said, "We are very proud of the children from Year 4 to 6 who volunteer their time as members of Mini Vinnies."



UNSW VINNIES CONFERENCE

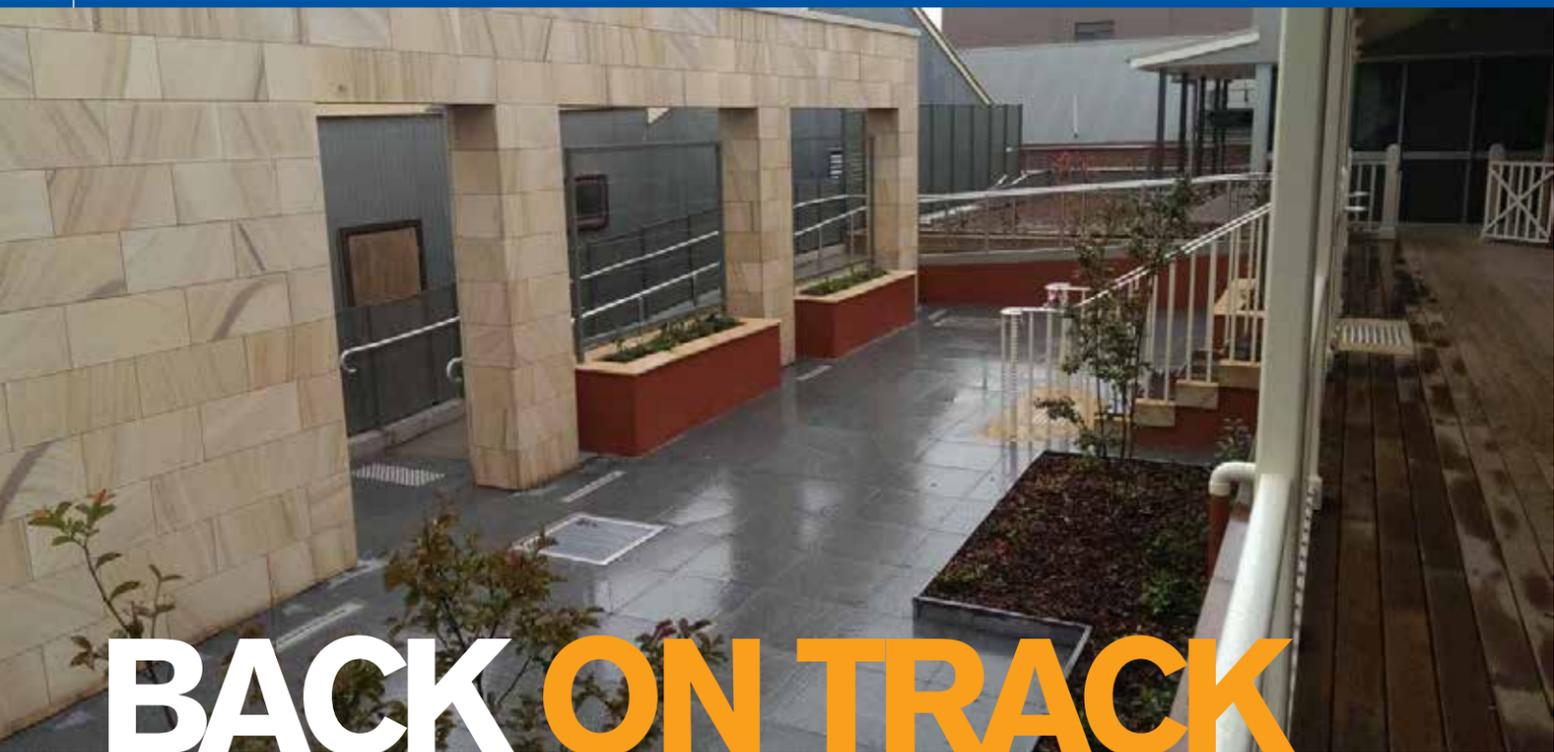
The members of The University of New South Wales (UNSW) Conference have had an active year. The young members participated in various training courses and were inspired by the words to "connect with the people we assist as every chat and action can have unexpected results and will be remembered by them for months to come."

The group also hosted their very own Vinnies Community Sleepout braving the winter cold on the university grounds. Julie McDonald, General Manager, Fundraising and Communications spoke to over 50 students at UNSW about the work the Society does and the potential of Community Sleepouts to both raise awareness and crucial funds to address homelessness.

SYDNEY ARCHDIOCESE VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

In September over 80 students from primary schools in the Sydney Archdiocese Central Council came together for their first ever Vinnies School Sleepout. Throughout the night the students learnt about the issue of homelessness particularly youth homelessness.





BACK ON TRACK

Losing someone special can often leave us feeling lost and bewildered. For Warren, the loss of his partner, son and father within a short period of time saw his whole world come crashing down. Warren was unable to cope and soon he fell back into homelessness, a situation he thought he had left far behind.

Warren began sleeping on the streets and moving around the State from one crisis centre to another for an occasional warm bed and meal. Desperate to get his life back on track, he moved back to his roots in Wagga Wagga. Back in familiar surroundings, Warren felt the strength to seek help for his issues, begin counselling and get in touch with the local Edel Quinn Homeless Service.

Edel Quinn has been providing specialised homeless services to men in the Wagga Wagga region for over 50 years. The service recently underwent extensive renovations allowing it to provide a holistic approach to homelessness including accommodation, individualised case management, counselling, specialised education and training facilities and importantly, outreach support to people living in the community. Edel Quinn has also expanded its services to support single women experiencing homelessness.

In line with the NSW Government's Going Home Staying Home reforms, the St Vincent de Paul Society provides a client-centered approach focusing on trauma informed care to better understand why people are experiencing homelessness.



With the intensive support of Edel Quinn case workers, Warren has now moved into his new home in Wagga Wagga. After his move, Edel Quinn arranged a new fridge and washing machine through their White Goods Program as well as furniture and other house hold items required to set up a home. Case workers continue to provide outreach support to Warren in his new home to ensure that he is able to maintain his tenancy.

Warren has become a valued member of the community and has started volunteering with his local Vinnies shop collecting and delivering donated items.

With the secure base of a home behind him, Warren is now focused on returning to the workforce and undertaking further training. Warren is determined to keep his life on track and when speaking about the support he received says, "When people work together, great change can happen."

A FRIEND IN NEED

Being diagnosed with a mental illness can be a lonely and daunting experience. Having friends to rely on can be vital in the journey towards recovery. The Compeer program aims to reduce loneliness and stigma by connecting people living with mental illness with friends in the community.

For Rachel, the Compeer program opened up a whole new world of friendships and allowed her to develop a new found confidence.

From her first day with Compeer, Rachel felt welcomed and valued. Rachel was given regular updates by Compeer throughout the process of matching her with a Compeer friend which helped ease her initial anxiety.

Rachel was matched with Michelle who, after almost five years, is now one of her closest friends.

From their first meeting, Rachel could see that Michelle was caring, understanding, helpful and most importantly non-judgemental. This was important to Rachel as she

had experienced a lot of isolation in the past due to her mental illness.

"In addition to being a great friend, Michelle is also a supportive companion, confidant and positive role model for me. She has always provided great advice and guidance whenever I have needed it," says Rachel.

Rachel says that she has created many special memories through Compeer like her 40th birthday, where Michelle spoilt her and took her to a high tea at the Gold Class cinemas. Or another birthday, which happened to fall on the Compeer annual dinner, where over 100 Compeer friends, sang her happy birthday.

Rachel would recommend that anyone living with a mental health issue get involved with Compeer.

"Compeer has helped me rediscover a sense of fun in friendship and expanded my life experiences. Thanks to Compeer I've been looking at volunteering with other organisations so that I too can give back to the community," says Rachel.





JUMP UP & DOWN 4 KIDS

Right now there are more than 600 children currently being held in immigration detention in Australia and Nauru. Keeping children in prison-like conditions is not only hurting them, it is hurting us all. All children, regardless of where they come from have a right to play, learn and feel safe.

This is a call for action. Do you want to 'jump up and down' for this issue and contribute to a wider voice for children who need protection?

Jump Up&Down 4 kids is an exciting initiative to get children out of detention. No politics. The message is: children should be free to jump and play. Until children are no longer in detention Australians are invited to jump up and down.

Vinnies NSW will be throwing its full support behind this advocacy campaign and we ask that you do what you can by posting your image of jumping for kids online.

GET ON BOARD BY DOING THE FOLLOWING:

1. LIKE THE JUMP UP&DOWN 4 KIDS FACEBOOK PAGE.
2. POST A PHOTO OR VIDEO DIRECTLY OF YOU AND/OR A GROUP OF PEOPLE JUMPING UP AND DOWN TO THEIR FACEBOOK PROFILE AND INCLUDE THE #JUMPING4KIDS
3. IF YOU HAVE TWITTER, TAKE A VIDEO OR PHOTO, THEN POST IT ON TWITTER USING THE HASHTAG #JUMPING4KIDS AND DON'T FORGET TO INCLUDE THE HANDLE @JUMPING4KIDS AND @VINNIESNSW



Christmas is a time to be transformed by the magic of stories. Two of my personal favourites are Charles Dickens' *The Christmas Carol* and Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express*. Both these Christmas classics have been brought to life in recent years through the technology of motion captured computer animation which seems to add to the realities of the magic.

The story of *The Christmas Carol* is very well known and has been a part of Christmas literature since 1843. It is the story of the "delightful" Ebenezer Scrooge's transformation from the "bah humbug" Christmas grouch to the joy filled and generous presence of Christmas morn. This great transformation occurs through the ghostly intercessions of Scrooge's former business partner Jacob Marley and the visitations throughout the night of the ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet to Come. It is similar to the scripture story of Ezekiel where God announces "a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek.36:26). The essence of such personal transformations finds hope and meaning in our relationships and engagements not only with our family, friends and colleagues but also with all we meet and share life.

The story of *The Polar Express* has a number of themes, but the one that strikes a chord with me is when Santa entrusts the boy with a bell as "The first gift of

Christmas". Of course the bell is no ordinary bell as it can only be heard by "those who truly believe". This story could be seen as a parody of the true story of Christmas! For just as Father Christmas entrusted a special gift, so too, God the Father entrusted to us the first gift of Christmas, the Christ Child. However like the reindeer's sleigh bell Jesus, throughout his life, was only fully heard by those who truly believed.

Contrasting these favourite Christmas stories which we treasure at this time of the year, the story of faith continues to chime through the everyday aspects of our lives. This faith for Frederic Ozanam was best heard in relationships grounded in faith, living in hope and growing always in love. Everyday extraordinary things happen to those in need through the work, care and compassion of ordinary people.

This Christmas season may the quintessence magic of the true Christmas story have found new meaning for us and in our Good Works may we take the opportunity to reflect, breathe, listen, and be a gift of caring presence to others as we continue to share our Vincentian spirit with all.

I hope you and your families had a happy and holy Christmas and I wish you a peace-filled New Year.

Leo Tucker
State Council Spiritual Advisor

HELP MAKE A CHRISTMAS WISH COME TRUE.

#vinniesAU   



**THERE ARE HUNDREDS
OF REASONS TO DONATE.**

YOU ONLY NEED ONE.



Vinnies Christmas Appeal



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Do Something About It.
Call **13 18 12** or visit
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