

# BUILDING HOPE

## BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER: THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS IN COMMUNITY

Christmas is a time for sharing meals, laughter and the joy of being together. Across our housing communities, residents, St Vincent de Paul Society Conference members and staff came together throughout December to celebrate the season – turning houses into homes and neighbours into friends.

For some, the holiday season is a time of warmth and connection, but for others, it can be a stark reminder of loneliness and isolation. Research shows that one in three Australians experience loneliness during this time, with vulnerable groups such as older Australians and people on lower incomes often feeling the effects the most. That's why fostering a sense of belonging is so important – because no one should feel alone, especially at Christmas.

In collaboration with the St Vincent de Paul Society, our teams helped create welcoming spaces where residents could come together, enjoy a meal and be part of a supportive community.

These gatherings weren't just about food and festivities – they were about connection, kindness and creating memories that last beyond the holiday season.

One resident shared, "At first, I wasn't sure what to expect, but the moment I arrived, I was met with warmth and kindness. Sharing a meal, having a chat, and seeing so many friendly faces made the day really special. It's times like these that make a community feel like home."

Moments like these reflect the heart of what we do – ensuring that our communities are not just places to live, but places to belong. From shared meals and thoughtful conversations to neighbours supporting each other, these small acts of kindness build stronger, more connected communities.

With 2025 now underway, we carry this spirit forward, ensuring our residents feel welcomed, respected and included – not just at Christmas, but every day of the year.



Homemade Christmas gifts for residents of Caringbah



Residents and Conference members at the annual Christmas barbecue in Woollooware

### 02-03 LATEST NEWS

Halloween at Penrith

Christmas Festivities at Merrylands, Katoomba, Caringbah and Penrith

### 04 HEALTH AND HOME

Start Fresh: Simple Ways to Get Ahead in 2025



## A MESSAGE FROM CEO, GRAHAM WEST

At St Vincent de Paul Society Housing Australia, we believe that a home is so much more than just four walls – it's a place to feel

safe, to belong and to build a future. While having a roof overhead provides security, it's the connections, friendships and sense of community that truly make a place feel like home. That's why we don't just focus on delivering housing – we're dedicated to creating welcoming, supportive communities where people feel valued and never alone.

Over the past few months, we've seen this sense of community come to life in wonderful ways. From Halloween celebrations in Penrith, where children and residents joined in on the fun, to Christmas gatherings stretching from Katoomba to Caringbah, these moments of joy and togetherness remind us of the importance of connection. Residents, staff and St Vincent de Paul Society Conference members have come together to share meals, laughter and stories – strengthening the support networks that make our communities so special.

As we continue to expand our housing developments, we remain committed to ensuring that our properties are more than just buildings. They are places where people can rebuild, reconnect and find hope. Together, with our dedicated staff, partners and the broader St Vincent de Paul Society, we are not just building homes – we are creating stronger, more connected communities.

Thank you to everyone who plays a part in this important work. Your time, effort and commitment makes a real difference!

Thank you

Graham West



## SPOOKY SPIRIT ALIVE AT PENRITH HALLOWEEN FEST

Halloween brought a touch of magic and mischief to St Vincent de Paul Society Housing Australia's Social and Affordable Housing units in Penrith on Sunday 27 October, as residents – especially the young and the young at heart – embraced the fun of the season.

Thanks to the enthusiastic Youth team volunteers, the housing complex was transformed into a festive Halloween hub. Children arrived in costume, ready for games, craft activities, special treats and of course, the highlight of the day – trick-or-treating! Residents were given a heads-up before the event, and those eager to join the fun decorated their doors and hallways, with some even dressing up to surprise and delight the little ghosts and goblins.



Adding to the excitement, volunteer, Harris (standing tall at 6'3") stole the show as Pesto the Penguin. Inspired by Pesto, the record-breaking SEA LIFE Melbourne penguin chick, Harris brought plenty of smiles and laughter as he waddled through the festivities, making this Halloween one to remember.

This special Buddies Day event highlighted the power of community, fostering connection and belonging among residents of all ages. A heartfelt thank you goes to the Youth team volunteers and their dedicated coordinator, Allie, whose energy and kindness helped make the day so memorable.

We deeply appreciate your efforts in creating such joyful moments!



Halloween celebrations at Penrith featuring Pesto the Penguin

## UPCOMING RENT REVIEW

Our annual rent review will start in late March/early April, with any rent changes taking effect in early June. Please remember to provide up-to-date household income information during the review and whenever there are changes in your household. If you have any questions, please contact our team.



## MERRYLANDS AND KATOOMBA CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

The holiday spirit was in full swing at Merrylands and Katoomba as residents, St Vincent de Paul Society Conference members and Tailored Support Coordinators came together to celebrate Christmas. Held on 19 and 20 December, both gatherings were blessed with mild, sunny weather, setting the perfect scene for a joyful and heartwarming celebration.

With good food, great company and plenty of holiday cheer, the events brought residents together to share stories, enjoy each other's company and embrace the festive spirit. The gatherings were filled with warmth and conversation, making for a relaxed and enjoyable way to celebrate the season.

These gatherings highlighted the importance of community, support and belonging, making Christmas all the more special. A big thank you to the Tailored Support Coordinators and Conference members for their time and effort in creating such a warm and welcoming celebration for all.



## CARINGBAH'S CHRISTMAS BBQ

Last December, the Caringbah Conference hosted its much-loved annual Christmas barbecue at Mount St Vincent in Woolooware, bringing residents together for a joyful celebration. Despite less than perfect

weather, the warmth of friendship, laughter and festive spirit made the day truly special.

Guests enjoyed a delicious spread of sausages, chicken, kebabs, fresh salads and delightful desserts, creating a feast fit for the occasion. The event was a wonderful opportunity for residents and Conference members to catch up and celebrate Christmas.

A special highlight of the day was Vicki's thoughtful homemade gifts, lovingly prepared for residents to take home – a small but meaningful token to enjoy with a cup of tea during the holiday season.

The Caringbah Christmas BBQ remains a cherished tradition, reminding us all of the importance of community, generosity and connection. A heartfelt thank you to the Caringbah Conference for their ongoing kindness and commitment to making these gatherings so special!



## CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AT PENRITH

Laughter, conversation and the delicious aroma of a sizzling BBQ filled the air at Penrith on Saturday 7 December, as St Vincent de Paul Society Conference members, residents and staff gathered for a festive Christmas lunch. Despite a few passing showers, the event was well attended, with guests eager to share in the holiday cheer.

Familiar faces Greg and Georg once again took up the BBQ tongs, serving up perfectly cooked sausages and onions, which were enjoyed alongside fresh salads, fruit and indulgent desserts. The

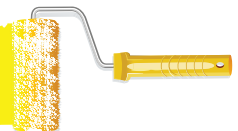
spread was warmly received, with many appreciating the effort and generosity behind the meal.

Beyond the food, the gathering provided a wonderful opportunity for residents to connect with their neighbours, share stories and reflect on the year. Many expressed their gratitude for the monthly morning teas hosted by the Conference members and the thriving community garden, both of which have played a key role in fostering a sense of belonging throughout the year.

As the afternoon wrapped up, it was clear that the true highlight of the event was the spirit of togetherness and friendship that makes the Penrith community so special.



**FOR REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE (INCLUDING URGENT WORKS AFTER HOURS): CALL 1800 950 575**



# HEALTH AND HOME



## START FRESH: SIMPLE WAYS TO GET AHEAD IN 2025

The start of a new year is the perfect time to reset, refresh and set yourself up for success at home and in life. Whether it's getting more organised, prioritising your health or making your home a more peaceful space, small changes now can make a big difference throughout the year. Here are some simple ways to start 2025 on the right foot.

### Declutter and Refresh Your Space

A tidy home can have a big impact on your mental clarity and overall wellbeing. Take some time to declutter key areas like your kitchen, bedroom and living space. Donate or recycle things you no longer need, and consider small changes – like fresh flowers, a new candle or rearranging furniture – to make your home feel fresh and inviting.

### Create a Healthy Routine

The new year is a great time to reassess your daily habits. Whether it's prioritising more sleep, staying hydrated or moving your body daily – small, consistent actions lead to long-term benefits. Try adding a morning stretch, an evening walk or meal prepping on Sundays to set yourself up for a healthier routine.

### Plan for Success

Setting intentions at the start of the year can help you stay on track. Use a planner, a digital calendar or even a simple to-do list to map out key goals – whether it's home projects, financial savings or personal growth. Breaking big goals into smaller, manageable steps makes them easier to achieve.

### Stay Connected

A fresh start isn't just about home and health – it's also about relationships. Make time to check in with neighbours, invite a friend for coffee or schedule a regular family meal. Strong connections make for a richer and more fulfilling year.

With a few thoughtful steps, you can set yourself up for a smooth and successful 2025. Whether it's a decluttered space, a healthier routine or more meaningful moments, a fresh start begins with small, intentional changes.

## FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

We take feedback, complaints and appeals seriously. If you would like to lodge a complaint, appeal a decision, or provide feedback on what we do well or what we can improve, there are several ways you can do this:

### Use our online Feedback form

Scan the QR Code

Call us on 1800 950 575 (free call).

### Access independent support

If you need assistance in making a complaint, appealing a decision or providing feedback you can ask a nominated person to help you. You will just need to provide consent for staff to talk with another nominated person on your behalf.

Your voice matters to us. For more information or for assistance, please speak to our staff.



ONLINE  
FEEDBACK FORM

