St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW

good works

VINNIES FLOOD RESPONSE REPORT 2023

Vinnies is rebuilding lives and communities across Australia

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has a long history of responding to disasters, and it was no different when catastrophic floods devastated many parts of New South Wales in 2022.

The Vinnies NSW Flood Appeal raised over $6 million, and we have distributed it in entirety to provide immediate relief, recovery, and longer-term rebuilding efforts.

The Society's members, employees and volunteers have been on the ground providing to help meet immediate needs and support longer-term recovery.

Our immediate cash grants payments made an enormous difference to people who lost so much. Conference Members across the state led this charge, supporting people and assessing their needs every day in recovery centres across the regions.

In the Lismore region, the cash grants program saw us provide over $3.2 million to 6,400 people in just two weeks.

The Society then moved into providing longer-term assistance, in the form of food, water, clothing, care, and everyday essentials, to the community.

In the Northern Rivers, the Vinnies Van from Liverpool was relocated and delivered food to communities from Casino to Coraki to Evans Head and more.

Thanks to our generous corporate partners including IGA, Amazon, Ezy Charge, Work Wear and BP, we were able to distribute sleeping bags, tents, generators, clothes, and petrol vouchers. Other gear, including nitrile gloves, shovels, mops, buckets, and first aid kits were provided by Bunnings to assist in the clean-up.

The deluges that brought the floods may have stopped but some of the destruction still remains. With thousands of homes badly damaged and uninhabitable, and so many people having lost everything - there is a still a strong need for ongoing assistance.

The recovery from the devastation can be slow but our support will continue. The Society has played a key role in responding to disasters in NSW and is committed to ensuring it has effective and efficient processes for responding in the future.

Paul Burton,

President,
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

Yolanda Saiz

CEO,
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

WHERE WE HELPED IN NSW

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW responded to the impacts of flooding right across the state, including in the towns and/or regional centres of:

- Lismore
- Canowindra
- Orange
- Molong
- Cowra
- Eugowra
- Woodstock
- Cudal
- Wee Waa
- Moree
- Walgett
- Parkes
- Forbes
- Condobolin & Euabalong
- Barham
- Tocumwal
- Narrandera
- Wagga Wagga
- Ballina
- Byron
- Clarence Valley
- Kyogle
- Richmond Valley
- Tweed
- Mungindi
- Collarenebri
- Narrabri
- Gunnedah

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

The Society has members on the ground in hundreds of communities throughout NSW.

The quick response to the disturbing news of floods, meant that our members and volunteers had funds to respond to the immediate and long-term need in their local communities.

In the immediate aftermath of flooding, our members supported households with food and petrol vouchers and other essential items such as insect repellent and bedding.

We provided temporary housing to affected individuals and families in hotels or other accommodation as they needed to urgently evacuate and had nowhere to go.

We also offered support to households with other items, including whitegoods to assist with refurbishing and building back their homes.

We recognise and thank our valued donors and corporate partners, coming forward during the floods and wanting to support the communities impacted.

Our dedicated Vinnies Retail shoppers also donated funds for flood-affected communities.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ACROSS THE REGIONS

Our members have partnered with many community-based organisations as they worked together to provide support in flood-impacted towns, including amongst others:

- Rotary
- Lions
- Country Women's Association
- Eugowra Community Bowls & Recreation Club
- CatholicCare
- GIVIT
- Local Councils
- Salvation Army

HOW WE HELPED IN NSW

RAISED OVER $6.6 MILLION
In the Vinnies NSW Flood Appeal

100% OF FUNDS DISTRIBUTED
in direct financial assistance and continue to provide support to the community for the long-term

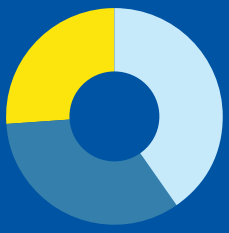
RECEIVED $1.3 MILLION
in commonwealth government funding

Our corporate partner IGA provided financial support of **$133,562**

Supplied Over **$3.9 MILLION** in grant payments

Gave out more than **$1.6 MILLION** worth of vouchers and other assistance

HOW THE DONATIONS WERE DISTRIBUTED BETWEEN THE REGIONS:



- 36% North East
- 30% North West / West / South
- 23% Other states

THE SOCIETY HAS BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE:

Emergency cash relief grants of up to $5,000

Material assistance with food, water, clothing, bedding, essential items and grocery vouchers

Emergency hotel accommodation for people who have lost everything

Referrals to organisations providing crisis accommodation and other specialised services

Financial assistance with bills to help households recover

A Vinnies Van delivering snack packs throughout the Northern Rivers

WATER
OVER
ROAD
HCC
HCC

HOW WE HELPED IN NORTH-EAST

The 2022 Northern Rivers floods are the worst flooding the region has experienced on record.

The floodwaters peaked in Lismore at 14.37 metres high.

Nearby cities including Casino, Mullumbimby, and Ballina were also badly affected.

In total, the floods rendered more than 3,600 homes uninhabitable — more than the number of homes destroyed by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires.

Vinnies Assistance

The St Vincent de Paul Society was the only major charity distributing financial assistance on the ground in the week after the floods hit the Northern Rivers.

We were able to do this with the support of donations from the public as well as generous corporate donors like IGA and News Corp.

We were working out of seven disaster recovery centres and, in addition to financial assistance, our members were also providing food, water, and everyday essentials.

Nearly three quarters of people (74%) who we provided financial assistance to did not have insurance. A fifth of people we helped were partially insured.

To ensure we could stay with the Northern Rivers community during their longer-term recovery, we moved away from direct financial grants to providing direct assistance with food, water, clothing, and other material assistance to people impacted by the floods.

The Society also distributed generators, tents, sleeping bags, towels, and fuel cards donated by generous corporate partners including Amazon, Ezy Charge, Work Wear, and BP.

DCJ FLOOD GRANT

100% funds spent

1,131 interactions

$60,400 for food fuel and material aid

Across the Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Tweed LGAs

Pods Project

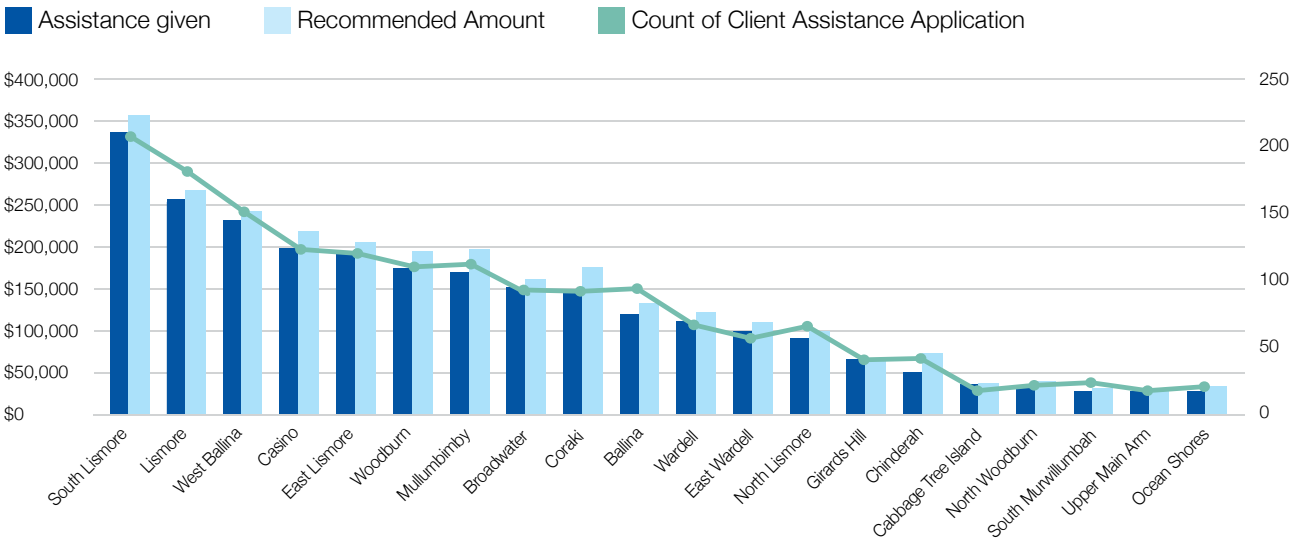
129 temporary accommodation units for flood impacted people were set up at Wollongbar and Evans Head.

Our members approached the managers of the sites, North Coast Community Housing, and asked how we could assist particularly coming up to Christmas.

Many units had children residing in them and we wanted to bring some fun to their Christmas.

We were able to provide 79 of the units with food and fuel vouchers, as well as vouchers to Ballina Waterslide, Bowling and Putt Putt, Byron Wildlife Sanctuary, Summerland Farm Vouchers and Movie Tickets.

Top 20 locations by assistance given:



HOW WE HELPED IN THE WEST & NORTH WEST REGIONS

The towns of Eugowra, Molong, Forbes, Cudal, Canowindra, Parkes and Condobolin, were hit by devastating floods in November 2022.

Many other towns and farming properties across the regions were also significantly affected by flooding and heavy rainfall.

Hundreds of families were impacted and tragically two lives were lost in Eugowra. Property damage included homes washed off piers, cars floating down the street, roads buckled and shipping containers sent sailing on the raging water.

Since that time the Society's members, volunteers and staff have been providing flood assistance support through Conferences and regularly on the ground in Eugowra and Forbes at Flood Assistance Days.

Members have provided not only financial assistance but most importantly pastoral care to affected community members.

We have also substantially assisted rural residents that had been badly affected with livestock losses, crop losses, substantial damage to fencing and machinery.

Community Spirit

The community spirit brings out the best in people, in Forbes we've seen this in the following ways:

- Received donations made directly to Forbes Vinnies by our local community
- Received donations from other areas, including one from Catholic Women's League and Vinnies Mortlake of $2,000 and another from an organisation in Sydney of $10,000
- A donation from a young man in Sydney who was raised in Forbes. He set up a *Go Fund Me* page which raised $16,500. He used this money to purchase 165 *Shop In Forbes* cards. These were given to each flood affected family we met with from Forbes or Eugowra.
- Evolution Mining donated *Shop In Forbes* cards, many of those given in late 2022 were used for flood assistance
- Sisters of Charity donated $100,000, comprising $25,000 each to the Armidale, Bathurst, Wilcannia/Forbes and Wagga Wagga Central Councils

STORIES FROM THE GROUND

STACEY, LISMORE RESIDENT

When comparing the various floods that have hit Lismore over the years, Stacey has no doubts over the severity of this latest disaster. Stacey vividly recalls the harrowing details of the worst floods to ever hit the region.

I was on the telephone to my cousin who lives over in South Lismore, she'd called me to say the water had hit and it was to her fourth step. I said, 'it's not to my house, not yet'.

By the time I turned around it was basically to the top of my stairs, it had come through my floor and back front door.

I got off the phone and called the SES, they told me they couldn't come, it was too dangerous and to get to the highest point of the house, which was my roof.

I had two boys in the roof, my 18-year-old cat and then we were stuck — my 15-year-old was trying to smash through to get us out, but we only just got a new roof, so we couldn't get out.

My neighbour next door smashed the window and got us out the next morning and we ended up going on the roof of his house.

There was about eight of us on that roof until two boats came and rescued us — it would've been five hours after.

I went down to my house a day later, my son found my 18-year-old cat alive and then my five boys started clearing my house out… I've lost everything.

EUGOWRA QUILT

A quilt serves as an example of community groups working together in Eugowra. First made and donated on the Central Coast, it was passed on through Eugowra Assistance to the Forbes CWA, and finally landed at Vinnies to give to a family who had suffered because of the floods.

Kirralee had Saige in Forbes Hospital on the 7th November during the floods in Forbes.

On the 14th November we had a tsunami like flood in Eugowra where I had to get Saige in the man-hole of the roof of our house and Kirralee as well.

They both spent 5 hours waiting in the roof, until emergency helicopter paramedics arrived and had to smash our roof and get them out. Saige was 6 days old!

They were both taken to Orange Base Hospital by helicopter.

HELEN SMITH, FORBES CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Helen has been associated with the St Vincent de Paul Society for quite some time. When disaster struck her town, Helen and her fellow members were able to act immediately in the giving of assistance where they saw a need.

In early November, when the river was rising and the first flood water approaching, we had many phone calls requesting food.

Not necessarily from people living in areas which would be inundated by water but from folks who were worried that because of their life situation they would not be able to afford to stock up on enough food to get them through the next week or so.

As it became apparent that a second wave of water was coming and we heard about the disaster at Eugowra, this demand increased.

When our town was cut-off, one of our members, Sr Elizabeth Young, travelled to Parkes to purchase food on our behalf and delivered to folks in North Forbes.

As the water started to go down the need went up! People could not work as their places of employment were not operating and for some households this meant no wages and no money for food! We were able to assist with $100 Woolworths vouchers along with fuel vouchers from our local business Nicholson Petroleum.

By the end of November, we were able to assist with the purchase of white goods, furniture and replacing possessions lost or damaged in the flood. We could give this assistance to an amount of up to $3,000 per family.

We also started to distribute $500 gift cards for Bunnings and Acheson's Mitre Ten, to provide assistance to persons renovating homes and replacing lost possessions.

Families in Forbes are still living in caravans, some waiting for pods, some waiting for insurance companies to assess, some waiting for trades people to come to do repairs, some struggling to complete repairs at their own expense to replace, to renovate and to bring their homes back to what they were and some are still attempting to find a rental.

The assistance we can give does not provide everything that these folks need but it does in some small way give them a hand up.

LONG-TERM RESPONSE

Disaster Response Framework

With the increasing number and severity of disasters in Australia, there is a growing need to be able to prepare for, respond to and recover from crises.

Vinnies NSW has worked with Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) to develop a Disaster Response Framework that will facilitate a coordinated approach to its disaster response activities when working in communities.

It is intended as a ready reference guide for those involved with the management of disasters, before, during and after. Key components of the Framework are:

- Processes and key actions for disaster preparedness and response
- Cross-organisational roles and responsibilities
- Parameters for decision-making and delegation of authority
- Protocols for health, safety, security and risk management
- Approaches for coordination, partnership and complementarity
- Guidelines for the application of evaluation and learning criteria for disaster response, including how to incorporate learning in future efforts.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW
DISASTER RESPONSE

WHEN WE HELP

Provision of recovery services after a disaster, not a first responder

Services can start being provided in the first 24–48 hours after a disaster

Service may be provided in recovery centres, at people's homes, or other locations

WHERE WE HELP

Material Assistance

Financial Assistance

Pastoral Care

HOW WE HELP

Our core competencies in disaster response:

- Members driven
- People centred
- Trauma informed
- Value driven

The people we work with:

- Conference members and volunteers
- Local government
- Corporate partners
- General public and community-based organisations

Values that guide us:

- Empathy
- Integrity
- Respect
- Compassion
- Commitment
- Advocacy
- Courage

St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW

good works

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR GOOD WORKS, GO TO WWW.VINNIES.ORG.AU OR CALL 13 18 12

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