



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NSW  
*good works*

AUTUMN 2026 | ISSUE 20

# IMPACT

**THE DIFFERENCE YOU MAKE**

**“Vinnies helped me in every aspect of my life”**

**Support through members, services, and vans**

**A new life for a father and son**

**Taking a person-centred approach to care**

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# Welcome



**The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has been making a difference in the lives of people across NSW for more than 140 years.**

The way we go about supporting people has evolved over that time, but at the core of our work is an enduring commitment to caring for and understanding the needs of individual people. We also seek to bring about a society that is grounded in justice and compassion.

In meeting the needs of each individual person and addressing the larger structural factors that cause disadvantage, the Society NSW can bring about change for the better.

As a generous donor, I am so thankful for your belief in the value of our work.

Your support directly impacts thousands of lives throughout the state each year. In the last year alone, our members, specialist frontline services, and Vinnies Vans have assisted over 200,000 people in their time of need.

At a time when so many people are experiencing financial hardship and seeking assistance, your commitment to supporting the Society NSW is greatly appreciated.

On behalf of everyone at the Society NSW and the people we assist – thank you!

As you read through these pages and see the stories of lives transformed, I hope you understand the difference your donation makes every day.

Yolanda Saiz  
Chief Executive Officer  
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

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Because we respect the privacy of the people we assist, some names in this newsletter may have been changed, stories summarised, and pictorial models used.

For more information about the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, contact: (02) 9568 0262 or [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au). Correspondence can be sent to [media.nsw@vinnies.org.au](mailto:media.nsw@vinnies.org.au).

Follow us on:    

# Your generosity in action

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW operates a range of specialist services operating across three core pillars: homelessness and housing, health, and disability and inclusion.

Approximately 11,800 people were supported by our Vinnies Services in the 2024/25 Financial Year.

## Your generosity has seen:



**6,674**

people supported through Homelessness and Housing services



**3,715**

people supported through Community Inclusion programs



**1,296**

people supported through Alcohol and Other Drugs services



**93**

people supported through Disability services



**1,716**

people supported through Domestic and Family Violence services



**677**

people supported through our homelessness primary health care clinic



**1,585**

people supported through migrant and humanitarian entrant resettlement service



**4,186**

people supported through our Client Engagement Hubs



Domestic and Family Violence (27%) was the leading reason people sought support from our Homelessness and Housing services



Our Homelessness and Housing services were able to secure faster housing outcomes with the average duration dropping from 245 days to 189 days over the last year



Two-thirds of people assisted by our Domestic and Family Violence services are known to be in stable accommodation at the completion of support

Every day, Vinnies Services is there for people in the toughest of times. Thank you for allowing us to be there through your generosity.

Scan the QR code or visit [nsw.vinnies.org.au/annual-report-2024/25](https://nsw.vinnies.org.au/annual-report-2024/25) to learn more about the impact of your financial support.



# Starting over free from fear



**To the outside world, Lauren appeared to have the hallmarks of a good life. A successful job. A nice home. A family of her own.**

But on the inside, “no one sees the other side of things.”

When Lauren first met her husband, she was drawn to someone who presented as lovely and kind-hearted.

However, it soon became clear that alcohol revealed a more sinister side.

As Lauren and her husband made a life together over the years, raising daughters Sienna and Ashleigh, the effects of alcohol began to turn the foundation of their home into a living nightmare.

“It was just so draining... Life was so unhappy for all of us,” recalls Lauren.

Even after seeking treatment for his alcohol usage, the dark cloud that lingered over their lives continued to persist as an occasional drink on the weekend became one during the week and then, once again, every day.

Alcohol made Lauren’s husband cruel, and his anger most often fell on the people he claimed to love the most.

The hostility Lauren faced turned physical on multiple occasions, with her husband punching holes in walls and threatening violence against their daughters among other instances.

“One time he banged on my door. I was on the other side of my bedroom door, and he would bang. He ended up breaking his hand because he was hitting it so hard.”

After so many years of walking on eggshells in a house that was meant to be a loving home, Lauren reached her limit and told her husband to go.

“All of a sudden, he up and left.”

With her husband gone, Lauren was dealt a further blow when she lost her long-term job shortly afterwards. In her hour of need, Lauren turned to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

**“I was at the lowest of low, and Vinnies really helped me. They helped with rent and electricity when I had no food for the kids.”**

“Vinnies just helped me in every aspect of my life.”

Lauren’s experience of domestic and family violence is tragically familiar among people supported by Vinnies NSW.

Domestic and family violence has consistently ranked as the most common reason people have sought assistance from our homelessness and housing services, accounting for 27% of all enquiries for help in the last year.

Over 1,700 people were supported through 16 domestic and family violence refuges and programs operated by Vinnies NSW in the last year, including two-thirds of people who were experiencing homelessness at the time of seeking assistance.

Much of the support Lauren received from Vinnies addressed immediate, tangible needs. But the most enduring impact of the support was the care freely offered from members like Heather who took the time to be with her when it she needed most.

“I would consider her a friend, definitely, not just a service she provides, but that warmth and friendliness, that personal side that I needed.”

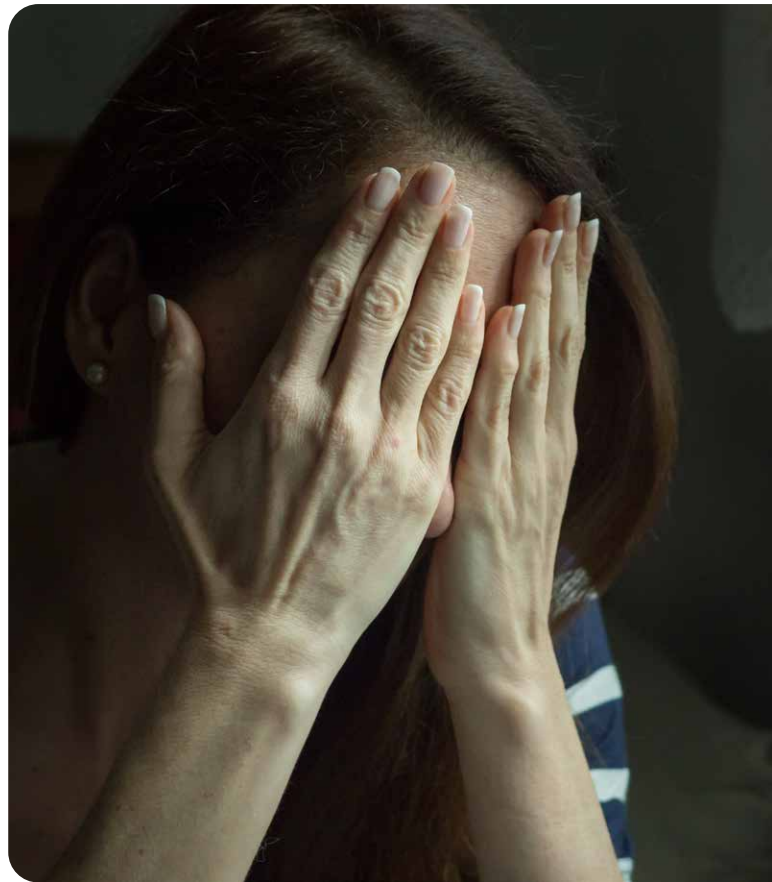
Lauren has since moved closer to the country to give her daughters a fresh start. Sienna, 17, is entering her final year of school and Vinnies has helped to provide her with a laptop for her studies. Ashleigh, 13, is preparing to start at a new school and is working with a counsellor to process the trauma she has experienced.

Looking towards the future, Lauren is focused on being there for her daughters and has re-engaged with training to become a support care worker.

“I want to be able to provide a place for my girls where they can live without fear.”

“My main goal is to provide them with a safe and happy place to live.”

Lauren is making a fresh start with her daughters through the support she has received from the team



at Vinnies. Your compassionate generosity has made that support possible.

Every day, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW members and services work with people in local communities across the state, offering a hand up in times of need. This assistance addresses immediate needs like food and clothing, a warm bed and longer-term case management, and crucially the emotional support to know that people aren’t alone.

Lauren and her daughters are just a few of the many families we’ve been able to support. By donating to the Vinnies NSW Autumn Appeal, you can know that people going through the toughest of circumstances are receiving the support they need to build a better life and thrive.

Donate online at [nsw.vinnies.org.au/autumnappeal](https://nsw.vinnies.org.au/autumnappeal), use the form on the back of this magazine, call 13 18 12

*or scan to donate*





## A father's love for his son

### **John's priority has always been to protect his son.**

After escaping domestic violence, numerous struggles with the family court system left him heavily in debt, without a car, emergency fund, or a safe home for his son, Cameron.

That's when Vincentian House offered a safe haven: a self-contained unit with full connection to St Vincent de Paul Society NSW wrap-around services to rebuild their lives. "Without Vinnies, I think we would've been on the street."

The move to Vincentian House came about suddenly. Upon learning that a place was available on a Friday, John gathered up the pieces of his life over the weekend before moving in the following Monday. As John and Cameron took a leap of faith into the unknown, they were met with open arms and supported at every step of their journey.

The 18-month stay at Vincentian House saw Cameron, aged eight at the time, slowly growing his confidence back after struggling to speak from a young age due to violence from his mother. Over time, his timid hellos turned into long conversations with the supportive staff providing understanding and encouragement in his life.

John became accustomed to a new life free from the volatility of his partner. Suddenly, the stressful days of court and late nights of paperwork became less daunting. Support was always there, food was on the table, and a roof was over their heads.

"Our time in Vincentian House was pivotal for Cameron. It took him from an area that was unstable to a stable environment. It taught him that he can

speak up and express his opinions without being denigrated or put down. He learnt a lot more – at school he was more expressive," said John.

They spent their weekends bike riding in the local national park, spending as much time together as they could. Cameron learned to live a new life, free from abuse. Not only was he speaking with confidence, but he eventually performed in a play at their local theatre to show just how far he had come. Nearly a decade on from their time at Vincentian House, John has worked away at his debts with a new job and has a forever home for his son. Cameron is 16, still at school, but with big dreams and passions about social justice and change for the future.

John looks back on his time in Vincentian House with gratitude, "Without that we would never have gotten to that junction point where we broke away from those issues."

With Cameron thriving, John is thankful for how far he's come, "I'm proud of what he's done, he's become an individual... He's learned to become his own person."

John has had to rebuild his life from scratch, and it hasn't been easy. With Vincentian House, he had time and support to do that. Now, the father and son are living the happy and stable life they dreamed of having together.

**In times of hardship, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is there for people. Your support ensures we can continue being there for families like John and Cameron.**

# Reaching out where people are

We operate 13 Vinnies Vans throughout the state which provide a range of support to the community – made possible thanks to your generosity.

Each night, people come to our Vinnies Vans for a meal but leave feeling fuller through conversations and connection. They can also access referrals to services to address other challenges they may be experiencing, such as housing, health, or engaging with government assistance.

Thanks to the support of donors like you, our Vinnies Vans have made a huge impact over the last financial year:



**115,000**  
people supported



**42,500**  
snack packs distributed



**230,000**  
meals served



**64,000**  
toiletries packs distributed



**12,000**  
referrals to additional services



## Meet Dom

Dom is a Team Leader with Vinnies Services based in Metropolitan Sydney.

As part of his role, Dom and other case workers go into the community where people access our Vinnies Vans.

Dom and his team meet with people while they're having a meal and listen to what brought them to the service.

For some, our Vinnies Vans may be the only meal they'll have all day. For others, being able to eat and talk to someone opens up a bigger conversation.

Our Vinnies Vans have established various community hubs across Metropolitan Sydney which allow people

to access health and Alcohol and Other Drugs services, clothing, legal aid, and the Department of Communities and Justice in one central space.

By taking the time to understand the needs of each person, Dom and his team can connect them to services run by St Vincent de Paul Society NSW or refer them to other providers present at the hub.

In recent years, our Vinnies Vans have seen an increase in people seeking support, with cost of living pressures contributing to the rise.

"The nature of the people we assist has transformed so much," says Dom.

"The common phrase 'the working poor' is something that we see so much. People that are coming down to our services that have worked for a day or are earning some kind of income but just need that extra bit of assistance to be able to keep going.

"It's changed completely. We're now assisting not only rough sleepers who are doing it tough on the streets, but also people in social housing who are struggling to get by due to the rising cost of living.

"Having the support of donors allows us to meet with people every day and make a difference in their lives. We're so thankful for your support!"

**You can make a difference with our Vinnies Vans in your local community. Scan the QR code to get involved today.**





# A person-centred approach to care

**A core part of the support provided by St Vincent de Paul Society NSW's health services is addressing alcohol and other drugs usage.**

Research from UNSW's Drug Policy Modelling Program shows that more than 100,000 people in NSW who want and are suitable for treatment are unable to access care, highlighting the need for support to be available when and where people need it.

Our services are tailored to meet people at various stages of support, from early intervention to crisis and recovery. These services include detoxification and rehabilitation, residential facilities, on-site day programs, and outreach programs.

One of the most impactful and farthest-reaching programs delivered by Vinnies NSW is the Continuing Coordinated Care Program – commonly known as CCCP.

CCCP aims to assist people through intensive case management to address their alcohol and other drugs usage in a supportive and non-judgemental environment. Participants voluntarily take part in the program and receive support from specialist staff that is tailored to their individual needs.

“It’s a person-centred model, so first and foremost it’s about reducing harm,” says Helen Williams, Manager of CCCP at St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

“It’s up to the person and what quality of life they want for themselves.”

With many people unable to access residential rehabilitation services due to lengthy wait times and geographical barriers, the reach of CCCP allows people to receive support who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

Another key feature of CCCP is its holistic approach which offers support beyond reducing substance use by supporting people with their needs around housing, health, income, education, employment, and family connections.

“We do a comprehensive assessment and case plan with each client that’s person-centred and based on where they’re at and what they need.”

Vinnies NSW delivers CCCP in partnership with the NSW Ministry of Health, supporting 521 people throughout the state during the last financial year.

## David's story

The life David and his wife, Angela, had with their three daughters was forever changed when Angela was diagnosed with early onset dementia and Parkinsons.

With Angela being responsible for managing the family’s finances, the upheaval caused by her diagnosis led to rental arrears building up, eventually resulting in homelessness.

The time between Angela’s diagnosis and passing was quick. The family was devastated at the loss of their wife and mother. David, in his grief, turned to drinking alcohol and smoking cannabis daily to cope.

At the lowest point, David’s daughters were removed from his care after he was hospitalised for attempting to take his life.

David sought treatment at a residential rehabilitation service and upon being discharged, connected with the Continuing Coordinated Care Program.

Through engagement with CCCP, David was determined to abstain from using alcohol and other drugs and worked towards restoring care of his children. He developed strategies to prevent relapse, accessed mental health support, sought referrals for financial counselling, peer support and grief counselling, and prepared for reunification with his daughters.

David has shown resilience following the most difficult period of his life. He’s currently working and attending a behaviour change program. He attends regular appointments with a drug and alcohol counsellor and has the confidence to reach out for support.

Crucially, he’s remained in contact with his children. He now has his 12-year-old daughter in his care and hopes to regain custody of his other daughters.

**Your support enables programs like CCCP to make a difference in the lives of people like David all across the state.**





## Support outside the cities

**Homelessness isn't limited to metropolitan areas. It takes many forms and is sadly on the rise. It's why the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW also has a presence in regional areas to meet the need that exists across the state.**

Edel Quinn is one of Vinnies NSW's main regional homelessness services, located 450 kilometres from Sydney and Melbourne, in the Riverina centre of Wagga Wagga.

The service is regularly at capacity with 16 rooms accommodating up to 18 people on any given night. In the last financial year, the team at Edel Quinn supported 244 people with accommodation and case management.

"When someone comes to us, they're probably in the highest distress that they've had in their life," says Damien Adams, Homelessness and Housing Manager.

"We try to alleviate that – a caseworker / counsellor / psychologist all wrapped into one."

This experience of support is something Shane knows all too well.

Having experienced a self-described "bad patch" in life, Shane spent five months sleeping under a palm tree at a local football field alongside his two dogs.

"I'd really hit down and out but I'd been told by local homeless people here in Wagga about Edel Quinn," says Shane.

Gaining a base of stability at the service, the case management team worked with Shane to identify additional support and ultimately find a longer-term home of his own.

"They put a roof over my head, fed me, found me somewhere to live, helped me clothe myself, get furniture in my house. They've done great things and made a big impact in my life."

**Regional services such as Edel Quinn change lives every day. Your support allows this change to happen.**

## Sarah shines with the light of hope

**St Vincent de Paul Society members are there to shine a light of hope for people going through the darkest of times.**

We're able to support thousands of people in local communities each year, and we're thrilled to provide an update on one of the families your generosity has benefitted.

As part of our annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal, we shared the story of Sarah and how her family was forever changed when her husband suffered a motor vehicle accident, resulting in a brain injury.

Sarah became the primary carer for her husband and three children, but the blows kept coming as her family endured years of housing precarity, including periods of homelessness.

Vinnies members were able to support Sarah with groceries, bills, clothing and more as she fought to keep her family's heads above water.

At times it was hard for Sarah to hold onto hope, "It just gets hard and you kind of feel like there's no light at the end of the tunnel."

The light Sarah was holding out for arrived late last year when her family was allocated a home close to the children's school.

Vinnies continued to lend a hand by organising a removal truck and providing new furniture to allow the family to celebrate Christmas together in their new home.

"I'm very grateful for Vinnies. They've helped restore my faith in humanity through genuine compassion – they're people who care."

**There are times when life knocks people down. Thanks to the support of donors like you, Vinnies can be there to lend a hand up to get people back on their feet.**



# The difference your support makes across the state

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW members supported over 100,000 people throughout the state for the second year in a row.

Your support ensures we can respond to the consistent demand for assistance throughout the state each and every day.



## Thanks to you:



**104,825**  
people were assisted



**\$15.1 million**  
in financial and material aid was distributed



**176,000 interactions**  
were conducted with people through office appointments, phone calls, and home visits



**73,635 hours**  
of support were provided through our members



**803 people**  
were supported through the No-Interest Loans scheme



**712 people**  
were supported through Energy Accounts Payment Assistance

## About the people our members assist:



**75%**  
of people requested food assistance



**49%**  
of people experienced housing stress



**31%**  
of people sought assistance for the first time



**25%**  
of people identified as First Nations

Scan the QR code to learn more about the impact of your financial support.



# Continued generosity: In Memory of Graham Houston Matheson

20 June 1925 – 18 May 2023

**Graham Matheson travelled far and wide over a life spanning close to a century. For all that changed in the world around him, his spirit of generosity remained a constant.**

Born in Adelaide to parents Ernest and Mary, and younger brother to Donald, his formative years were spent at St Peter's College and the University of Adelaide, where he studied Metallurgy.

Beginning a lifelong career in mining with his first job posting taking him to Broken Hill, further opportunities led Graham abroad to Canada and Wales before returning to Australia, where he called Mt Isa home for a time.

Joining BHP and playing a major role in the development of the company's manganese mine on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria, he finished his time at BHP Engineering as a Senior Consultant in North Sydney.

To those who knew him, Graham's generosity extended well beyond material means. His was a generosity of things less tangible – time, effort, and assessment of other people.

That last trait served him well throughout his professional life, where he walked comfortably between the upper echelons of Australia's corporate business leaders and the rough and tumble world of workers running remote mining sites. Whether someone's suit was tailored or hi-vis, Graham sought to be present and connect in each shared moment.

Retiring in 1990 following a swan song providing metallurgical assistance on a World Bank project in Mexico, he continued to travel with the distinction of doing so for pleasure rather than business.

Having made shrewd investments that proved successful, Graham's non-materialistic character made him a generous benefactor to many friends and institutions, including the arts, ballet, and the opera. Graham had been a great supporter of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW for over 20 years and had a passion for the Matthew Talbot Hostel (MTH) at Woolloomooloo.

Graham was never lacking for connection among a very broad and diverse group of friends. In his later life, he experienced failing eyesight but was still able to conjure up a good story or two.

We thank Graham for his generosity and extend our sympathy to his loved ones for their loss.

In communities all across the state, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is able to lend a hand to people in need.

Graham's generosity will allow Vinnies NSW to support men experiencing and at risk of homelessness through the MTH.

Each year, MTH offers refuge to hundreds of men through a safe place to sleep, case management, and the support to rebuild their lives. More than 127,000 meals are served annually at MTH, while the on-site health clinic provided over 10,000 appointments, supporting men often overlooked by mainstream health services with medication, referrals to specialists, and immunisations.

By leaving a gift in your Will to Vinnies NSW, just like Graham, you can ensure this support continues for years to come.

**To learn more about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact our Gifts in Wills Manager, Cherie McKenna.**

**Phone: (02) 8622 0387 or**

**Email: [cherie.mckenna@vinnies.org.au](mailto:cherie.mckenna@vinnies.org.au).**



