

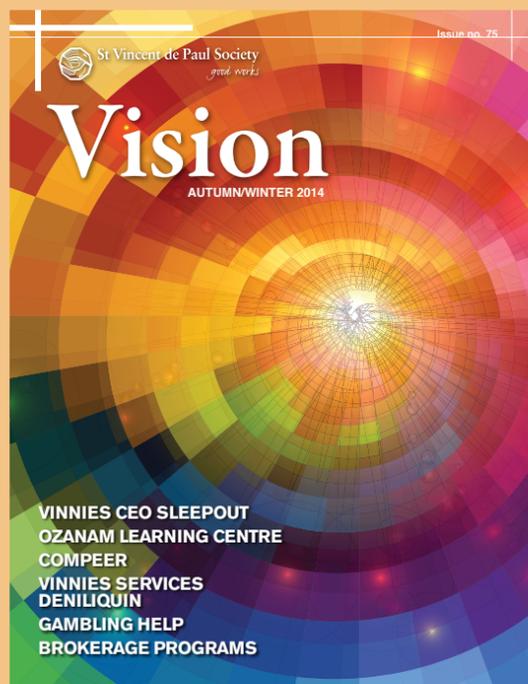


St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*

# Vision

AUTUMN/WINTER 2014

**VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT  
OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE  
COMPEER  
GAMBLING HELP  
BROKERAGE PROGRAMS  
CHARLES O'NEILL**



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.

Supervising Editor: Julie McDonald

Editor: Yolanda Saiz

Art Director: Claudia Williams

Distribution: Ozanam Industries, a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (02) 9807 4066  
www.ozanamindustries.org.au

All correspondence and contributions can be sent to:

Communications Manager  
Fundraising and Communications  
St Vincent de Paul Society  
PO Box 5, Petersham NSW 2049  
Email: yolanda.saiz@vinnies.org.au Phone: (02) 9568 0293

State Council: Ray Reynolds (President), Peter Leckie, Beverley Kerr, Gwen Sampson, Paul Shiel, Matthew Kirkham, Peter McNamara, Kerry Muir (until June 2014), Rosemary Sinclair (from June 2014), Bob Lulham, Barry Finch, Brian Goodall, Peter Fishlock, Alan Ruff, Barry Jones, Don Jones, Vince Toohey, Denis Walsh.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in Vision are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Responsibility for the content of this publication is taken by Julie McDonald, F & C General Manager.

© St Vincent de Paul Society NSW 2014 ABN: 91 161 127 340

We'd love to hear what the Society is doing in your area. Send us a letter or email, or call with an idea for a story or news piece: yolanda.saiz@vinnies.org.au or (02) 9568 0293.

Please DO NOT send original photographs.



- 4 MEMBERS NEWS
- 8 MEMBER & VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT
- 12 COMMUNITY & CORPORATE GIVING
- 16 YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS
- 19 FEATURES
- 31 SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is with great pleasure that I present you with Autumn/Winter edition of Vision. In future, you will receive Vision in July and December each year. Through Vision we are able to share the great work that our members are undertaking across the State, as well as update you on the crucial work being undertaken at our services.

We have had a very busy first half of the year and a great deal of work has been done in the area of membership recruitment and retention. It is imperative that we look at new ways of engaging people to join the good works of the Society if we are to be sustainable in the long-term. On page 8 you can read about the work being undertaken on this front.

The great work of our members in NSW began with the founding of the first Conference in 1881 at St Patrick's Church Hill in Sydney's Rocks district by Charles Gordon O'Neill. We should remember his vision for helping those experiencing disadvantage as we go about our work each and every day. You can read more about this inspirational man on page 27.

Social justice has always been at the core of what the Society stands for, as we seek fairness, equality and action. Our Social Justice Committee has been very busy working on our key areas of advocacy - Affordable Housing and Homelessness, Utility and Cost of Living Pressures, and Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

As Pope Francis recently said, "A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being."

As we visit with people who need a helping hand, we should remember that there is nothing more uplifting than connecting with these people, assisting them and walking a journey with them.

Yours sincerely,

**Ray Reynolds**

President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

## CEO'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,  
Welcome to the July edition of Vision. The Vinnies CEO Sleepout was held on 19 June and was once again an overwhelming success. The event saw leading fundraisers, Holly Kramer, CEO Best&Less and George Frazis, CEO St George Banking Group raise over \$210,000 each - a tremendous effort. The event attracted 1000 CEOs nationally and around 300 in NSW and has raised \$5.7 million across the country and \$2 million in NSW. Since its inception, the event has raised a total of \$24 million towards the provision of homeless services across the country, an outcome we should all be very proud of. To read more about the Vinnies CEO Sleepout go to pages 20-21.

As you may know, homelessness services in NSW were re-tendered earlier this year under the State government's *Going Home Staying Home* reforms. The outcomes of the tenders were announced in early June.

One of our great strengths in this area is our capacity to identify people at risk of homelessness through our member's visitation work. You can read more about the tender outcomes on page 29.

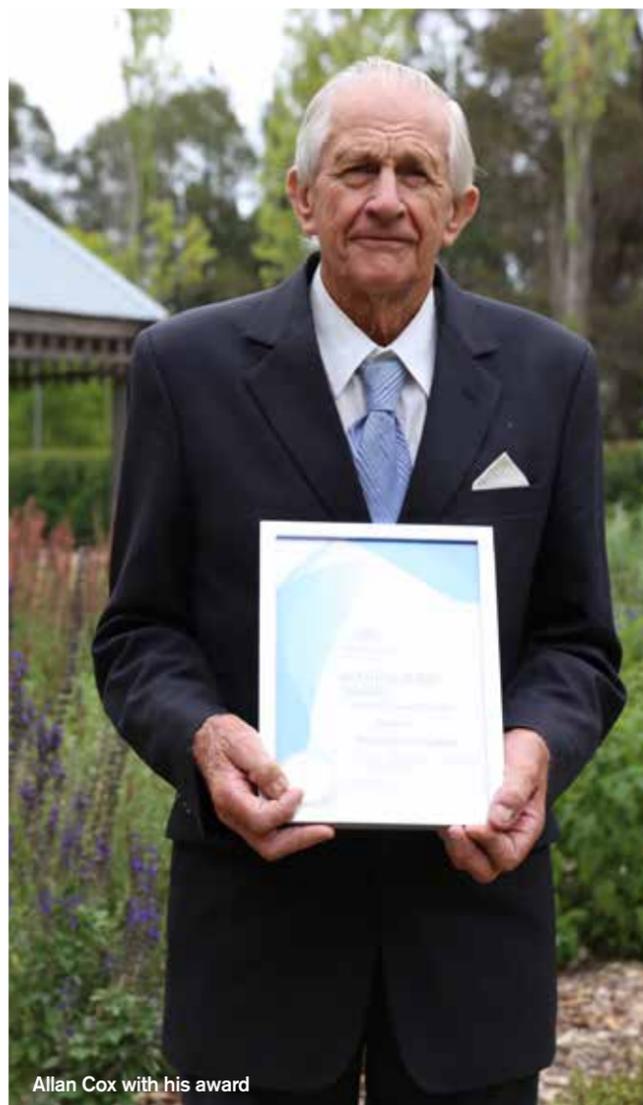
We have recently advocated strongly through the media and our members against many of the harsh measures included in the federal budget, especially those impacting on low-income families, young people and pensioners. We must continue to send a strong message to both sides of federal politics that policy decisions should not push people further into poverty but assist them in breaking that cycle.

I look forward to the next six months and the continued work of members, volunteers and employees with the end aim of making a difference to the lives of people experiencing disadvantage.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Perusco**

Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



Allan Cox with his award

## LIFETIME OF SERVICE

Long-time St Vincent de Paul Society member Allan Cox was awarded Wollondilly Shire Council Senior Citizen of the Year during the Australia Day celebrations. Mr Cox has been a dedicated and active member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for over 60 years since first joining as an 18 year old.

During his time with the Society, Allan has made hundreds of home and hospital visits to people experiencing disadvantage in the Thirlmere region making him a well-known member of the local community. Congratulations Allan.



## VINNIES MEMBERS AWARDED ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL

Freshwater Conference member Rupert Hudson was awarded the Order of Australia medal in the Australia Day Honours List for service to the community. Rupert first joined the Freshwater Conference in 1951 and since then has held various positions including Conference President, Regional President, Centres President and Vice President of the NSW State Council.

Rupert was also very involved with the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council and the International Council General of the Society. Rupert's community service extends outside the Society where he is also involved with the local Parish, other Catholic organisations and his local football clubs. Rupert continues to visit the Villawood Detention Centre every week as he has done for 14 years. Congratulations to Rupert.

If you have any interesting news, have celebrated a milestone or been recognised for your service, please let us know by emailing [sophie.bawden@vinnies.org.au](mailto:sophie.bawden@vinnies.org.au)

## GIFTING INDEPENDENCE

St Brigid's Conference, Dubbo (Bathurst Central Council) gave local five year old boy Myles a special gift, buying him a wheelchair. When he was two weeks old Myles had a stroke and was later diagnosed with cerebral palsy which affects his vision, communication and mobility. The wheelchair has allowed him to move independently instead of being confined to a stroller.

To keep up with the costs of the wheelchair as Myles grows older, the Society has set up a trust fund for Myles's family. Local school students and services have begun to fundraise with the money going into the trust fund.

Pat Yeo, St Brigid's Conference member said that the community was so glad to be able to give Myles an opportunity for more independence.



To the members of the St Vincent de Paul Society,  
Our family would like to thank you for your very generous donation for Myles's wheelchair.

It was exciting and a huge relief to learn your organisation were willing to pay the full cost. Thank you so much.

Myles has been having a wonderful time in his chair. He's quickly learning to 'scoot scoot', and his new wheels have made him pretty popular at his Preschool!

The new chair has made taking Myles to school, the shops or out

anywhere so much easier. Myles has really enjoyed wheeling himself around at the supermarket!

...and thanks again!

So thank you! Your generosity has made a huge difference to our whole family.

Best wishes,  
Ali, Rob, Myles and Sam  
Wilton.



Maria Copet celebrates with her fellow Vinnies volunteers. Photo courtesy of Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser.

## HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY MARIA

Long term volunteer Maria Copet celebrated her 90th birthday at her local Vinnies Shop surrounded by her friends. After migrating from Slovenia to Australia and falling in love with her new country, Maria wanted to give back to the community. Along with her daughter she decided to volunteer at her local Vinnies Shop and decades later she is still giving of her time.

## PAT LEONARD RECEIVES COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Pat Leonard has been a dedicated member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for over 60 years since first joining in 1946. Throughout his time with the Society in Broken Hill, Pat has held the role of Conference President, Central Council President, Wilcannia/Forbes Diocesan President and Conference Spiritual Advisor.

In recognition of his ongoing hard work and commitment to the community, Pat was presented with a NSW Government Community Service Award.

We congratulate Pat on his award and thank him for his ongoing service to the Society.



The Hon. John Williams, Member for Murray Darling presenting Pat Leonard with his award.

## HIGHEST HONOUR

Making a difference in their local community has seen Carl and Judy Nolan awarded one of the Catholic Church's highest honours from the Pope.

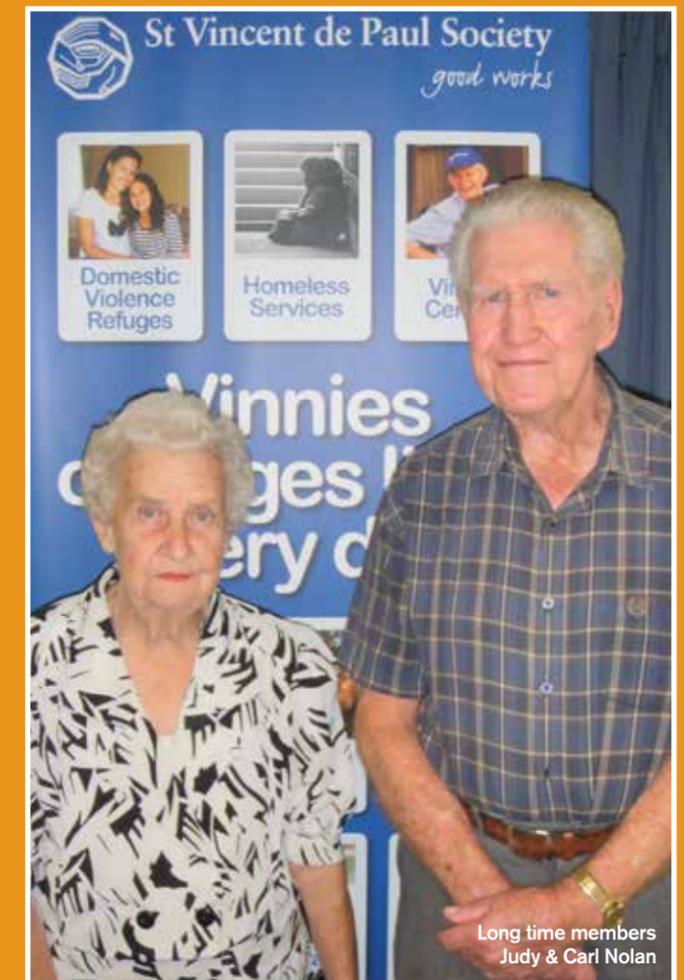
The couple, 81 and 79, received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal. The medal, also known as the Cross of Honour, is the highest papal honour available to lay people and recognises distinguished service to the Church.

It marks the Nolans' dedication to their local parish, school and broader community for almost half a century. Carl has been a member of the Society for 40 years while his wife organises the church choir and plays the organ.

Mrs Nolan said they had simply "done their bit" and was embarrassed and overwhelmed by the honour.

Introduced by Pope Leo XIII in 1888, the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal recognises clergy and laity's distinguished service.

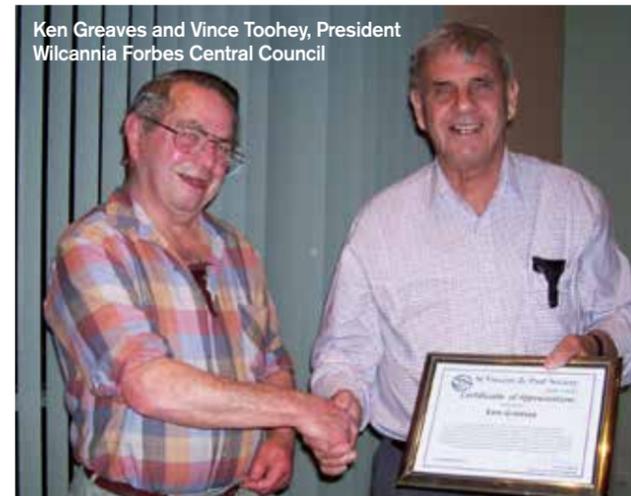
The Society would like to congratulate the Nolans' on this outstanding honour.



Long time members Judy & Carl Nolan

## RECOGNISING 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

Ken Greaves and Vince Toohey, President Wilcannia Forbes Central Council



After almost 60 years of dedicated service to the St Vincent de Paul Society, Ken Greaves has retired as Deniliquin Regional President. Ken first joined St Michaels Conference in Deniliquin in 1956 before going to Papua New Guinea as a lay missionary for two years and later for a further three years with his wife Daphne.

On his return to Deniliquin, Ken reconnected with his Conference before becoming the Manager of Ozanam Men's Shelter, a position he held for 16 years. After retiring from the Shelter, Ken continued his Conference work holding the position of President, Central Council Twinning Officer and most recently Regional President.

Ken is described by his fellow Vincentians as a no fuss, quiet achiever and his contribution is tremendously valued.



## ENERGISING MEMBER RECRUITMENT

An energetic and enthusiastic State Recruitment Team (SRT) has recently been launched. The SRT brings together younger and senior members to attract new people to participate in the Society. This is an initiative of State Council Vice Presidents, Matthew Kirkham and Paul Sheil and we sat down with them to ask a few questions about the great work taking place in attracting new members.

### HOW WILL THE NEW SRT WORK?

**Matthew:** The SRT will support Conferences and Regions with their member recruitment. Working with Conference members and Regional Council Presidents they will identify specific needs, bring ideas for engaging new people of all ages and be part of the face to face recruitment. The SRT is working closely with the State Membership Advisory Committee to engage people of all ages to join us in our service.

### WHY IS THIS RECRUITMENT WORK IMPORTANT?

**Paul:** We need to attract new members to ensure our work can continue well into the future. If there are more of us, how much more can we do for those who need us? Someone invited us to join, why keep this to ourselves!

### CAN YOU TELL US OF SOME OF THE OUTCOMES ALREADY ACHIEVED BY THE STATE MEMBERSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND SOCIETY MEMBERS THAT SRT WILL BUILD ON?

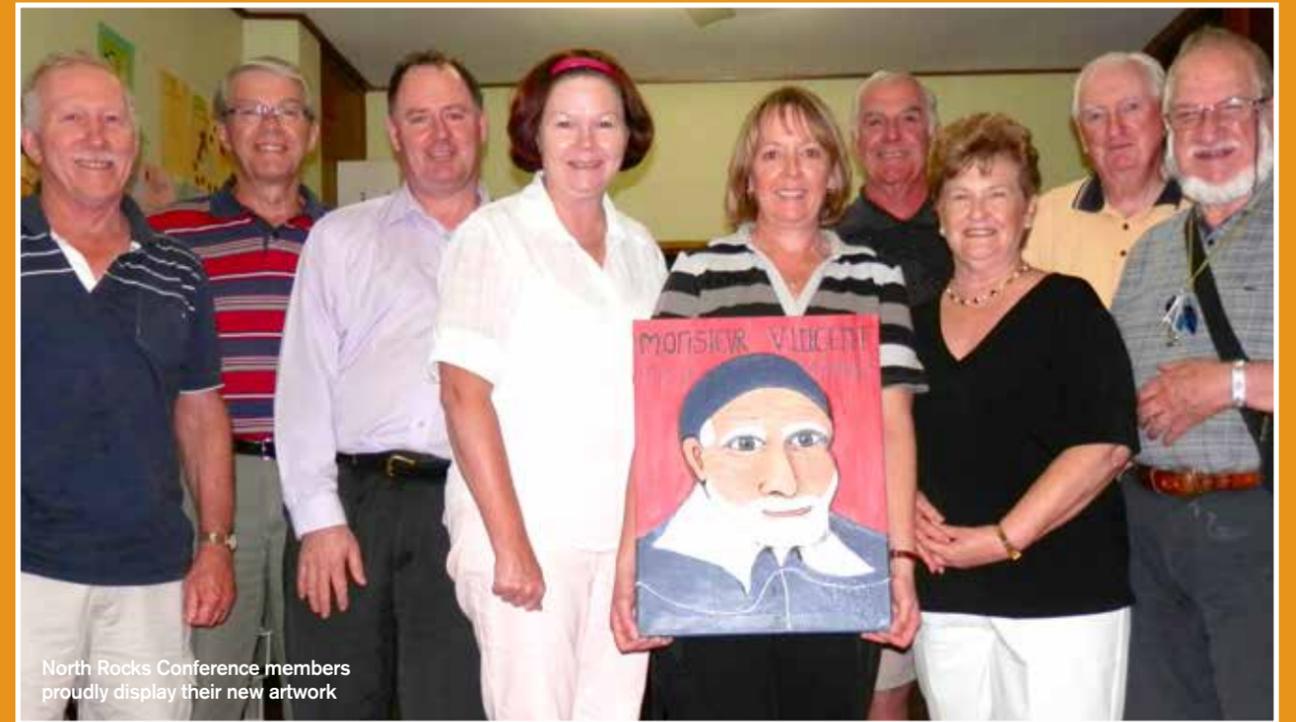
**Paul:** Apart from the work already undertaken in starting a new Conference in the Liverpool Region (DePaul Outreach) which engages new people to join with current members to provide additional services to people in need in that area, we are starting to see great outcomes across the state. In addition to Sydney Central Council, I am working with regions in Wagga Wagga, Armidale and Wollongong to revive Conferences and get new ones started.

**Matthew:** It's very exciting, State Membership Advisory Committee members report that new Conferences have begun in Wagga Wagga, Sydney and Parramatta Central Councils. The Lake Macquarie Region in Maitland/Newcastle recently held a Recruitment Workshop with over 40 members attending. Evans Region in Bathurst had a 'Round Table' event to explore new approaches to membership. Lismore has had recruitment drives in most Regions with many Conferences reporting success in engaging new members.

### HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE SRT?

**Matthew:** We are excited about how the SRT will help local initiatives continue to grow across the State. We are also pleased to see such a great response and encouraged by the support of the State and Central Councils.

**Paul:** They know that as activity increases, we will see a growth in our members. Many people are reluctant at first, but once they do some visits, they are hooked.



North Rocks Conference members proudly display their new artwork

## CONFERENCE RECEIVES UNIQUE FORM OF THANKS

When North Rocks Conference member Ron Giacomelli gave a prayer card to a person he was assisting during a home visit, the man was so thankful that he created a beautiful painting of the picture of St Vincent which appeared on the prayer card.

The North Rocks Conference was very touched by the kind gesture. Conference President Annette Hoban said, "The man explained he developed

quite a strong bond with St Vincent as he painted him and would be sad to let him go, but he wanted the Conference to have this as his special way of saying thanks."

The painting now hangs proudly in the meeting room of the Christ the King Parish, North Rocks Parish Hall where the Conference members meet each week.

## CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICY UPDATES

**A Code of Conduct has been developed for all employees, members and volunteers in order to help us all work together in a way, which is consistent with our vision, mission and values.**

The Code of Conduct emphasises our commitment to promoting a professional and accountable work environment. One which emphasises transparency and openness under strong, compassionate leadership and being timely and responsive to valid community concerns.

Training and facilitation tools are being developed to help implement the Code of Conduct throughout the Society in 2014.

**Policy Updates:** NSW State Council has approved three policies – the Complaints Policy, Whistle-blower Policy and an updated Fraud Policy. These are available on the Society's Vintranet and Fact Sheets will also be made available.

## BROKEN HILL CONFERENCE LOOKS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Conference members in Broken Hill ran a booth at a Broken Hill volunteer event handing out 120 goody bags with information about the Society and opportunities for people to get involved through Assist-a-Student, volunteering and membership. Over 40 exhibitors participated in the exhibition, with many people showing an interest in the Society.



## LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL HOSTS LEADERSHIP FORUM

Lismore Central Council held a one day forum for 53 Conference leaders in Grafton to discuss the changing nature of assistance offered by Conferences and how best to help the people they assist. The forum was facilitated by Ian Colley from Make Stuff Happen.

The leaders had great discussions throughout the day and identified a number of priority areas including developing and maintaining quality relationships with the people we assist; creating referral networks and working with other welfare services; regular training for Conference members on budget counselling, listening skills and mentoring; and recruiting new members. Due to the success of the forum, this event will now be held annually.

## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY



The Society celebrated International Volunteer Day by recognising the dedication of all our volunteers and paying special tribute to the achievement and contribution of young volunteers.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has over 16,000 volunteers and members including around 5000 young volunteers, who follow the example of our founder Frederic Ozanam.

One young volunteer said their reason for volunteering was to "show society that not all teenagers are rebels and that they only care about themselves. This was the perfect way... to prove this to the public."

Thank you to all of our members and volunteers for their contribution making a difference to the lives of people in need every day.

## LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS

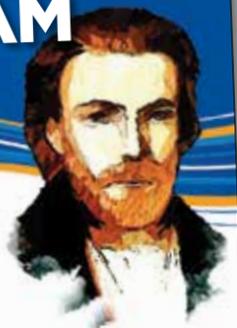
Former Orara Regional President Robyn Barnett presented the Blessed Frederic Ozanam Scholarship to Emmanuel Reech of John Paul College, Coffs Harbour.

The scholarships worth a total of \$44,000 per year are presented to students who need assistance to complete their studies by Lismore Central Council. Students are selected from Years 11 and 12 from the eleven Catholic High Schools in the Central Council area.

The picture is of Emmanuel Reech and his mother Julia receiving the scholarship from Robyn Barnett; Gordon Egan, Vice President Lismore Central Council; and Gail Gauldron, newly appointed Orara Regional President.



## THE LEGACY OF FREDERIC OZANAM



An uplifting presentation about the beginning of the St Vincent de Paul Society and how the founding spirit of Frederic Ozanam continues today.

## FREDERIC OZANAM DVD RESOURCE

To commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Frederic Ozanam a video on the legacy of Frederic Ozanam and the beginnings of the St Vincent de Paul Society has been developed. The video focuses on how the spirit of Frederic Ozanam and his companions lives on through the members, volunteers and employees of the Society today.

The video is now available on DVD. Please contact MAVE team on [membership@vinnies.org.au](mailto:membership@vinnies.org.au) for a copy.

# MATES FUN RUN FOR VINNIES

**Bowral parishioner David Whetton challenged his mates to a fun run in order to raise funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society.** After putting out the challenge to the local Vinnies Conferences in the Southern Highlands, the group of 25 ran 16km from the Briar's Country Lodge and Historic Inn, Burradoo to the top of Mt Gibraltar then back to the Bowral pool for a finishing BBQ. The day was a great success and raised over \$3000 for the St Vincent de Paul Society.



## IGA BACKS VINNIES

**IGA once again joined forces with Vinnies to help raise close to \$395,000 nationally for the Vinnies Christmas Appeal.** Throughout the Christmas period IGA customers could purchase a \$2 Vinnies Christmas bauble or buy specially marked products through the IGA Community Chest program, where a percentage of sales were donated to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal.

IGA also auctioned off their IGA branded Vespa LML Star Series Scooter which was featured with comedian Anh Do in their Christmas ad campaign. The online auction raised an additional \$10,450 for Vinnies to help people experiencing disadvantage all around Australia. Thank you to our friends at IGA.



Vinnies City2Surf team members start training

## JOIN THE 2014 VINNIES CITY2SURF TEAM TODAY

Are you interested in getting fit, fundraising for Vinnies and having a fun day out?

Registrations for this year's City2Surf on Sunday 10 August, are now open! All funds raised for Vinnies will support people and families experiencing disadvantage across NSW. So whether you want to walk, jog, side step, skip, moon walk or run the course, your support will make a life-changing difference.

To register visit [city2surf.com.au](http://city2surf.com.au) and select St Vincent de Paul Society from the charity listing menu. For more information please contact [kristina.kanaris@vinnies.org.au](mailto:kristina.kanaris@vinnies.org.au) or call (02) 9568 0266.



Vinnies NSW Fundraising and Communications General Manager Julie McDonald with Mr Thanh Nguyen, President Vietnamese Community of Australia

## GIVING BACK

The Vietnamese Community of Australia continued their wonderful long term support of the St Vincent de Paul Society raising a staggering \$165,000 for the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal. The Vietnamese Community of Australia held various community fundraising events to raise the funds.

## FULL SWING AHEAD

In response to the devastating bushfires in NSW earlier this year, staff at Salesforce Sydney decided to do something about it and held a golf tournament to raise funds. The group had a very successful day and raised over \$4300 for Vinnies' work on the ground in bushfire affected communities.



## MINERS DIG DEEP FOR VINNIES PARKES



**Vinnies Parkes welcomed 14 employees from Northparkes Mines to help assist sorting through a huge amount of donations that had been received.** The sorting room was filled to capacity but within a couple of hours the volunteers had moved, sorted, folded and sifted through the generous donations.

Stacey Kelly, Northparkes Mines Acting Human Resources Manager said, "The day was a great way for us to do something worthwhile in the community and really help out." Vinnies Parkes volunteers would like to thank Northparkes Mines for their assistance.



## DELIVERING CARE PACKAGES

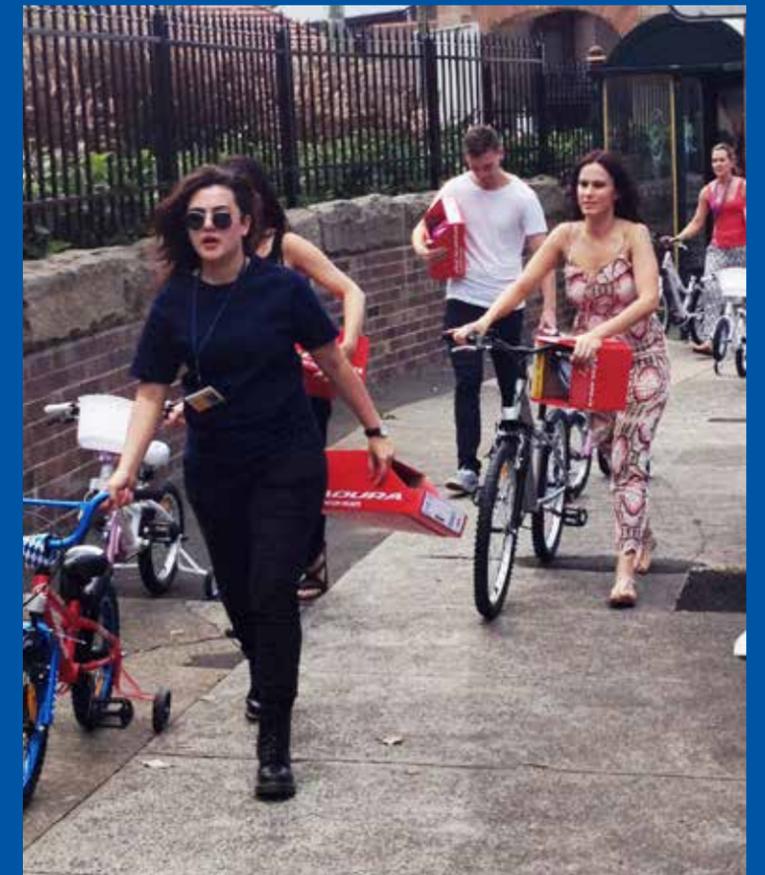
**Over 500 wonderful volunteers including staff, students, alumni, friends and industry partners from the Sydney Nursing School, The University of Sydney packed around 5000 care kits for the Matthew Talbot Hostel to distribute to people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage.**

The care kits included essential items for ongoing health, hygiene and comfort including soap, shampoo and toothpaste. While they were small kits, they made a large difference in the life of people experiencing hardship at Christmas.

## BEST & LESS GIFT BIKES

Best&Less head office staff built 25 children's bikes which they delivered to a St Vincent de Paul Society refuge for women and children. The children were overjoyed by the new gifts and were almost as surprised as their mothers who did not know the presents were coming.

One Best&Less team member said, "It was an amazing experience being involved, it was the most moving moment of my life."



## BEST&LESS SHOP FOR GOOD HELPS KIDS GET BACK TO SCHOOL

In partnership with Best&Less, the Shop for Good initiative was created to raise funds to assist families struggling with back to school costs. By purchasing a \$2 Vinnies cardboard T-shirt in any Best&Less store, customers and staff raised funds to provide essential school equipment and uniforms to kids who need it most. The campaign raised an amazing \$226,204 for Vinnies to assist families in need.



St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO Michael Perusco and Best&Less CEO Holly Kramer

# BRINGING BACK SMILES

The bushfires that devastated the lower Blue Mountains destroyed the homes and lives of many families and children. Vinnies members responded on the ground providing material and financial assistance to the local community. In addition to this, Vinnies Youth volunteers from Parramatta Central Council decided to host a series of Buddies Days to provide some fun and relief for children aged between 5 and 12 affected by the fires. Some of the fun activities involved sumo suit wrestling; water dunking; cooking; circus skills and gladiator wars on jumping castles.

Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who, with a lot of enthusiasm and compassion, brought smiles to the faces of so many children.



## FRED'S FILM FESTIVAL

To commemorate the bicentenary of Frederic Ozanam's birth, Youth Conferences were challenged to take part in Fred's Film Festival, a competition which gave young people a chance to use their creativity to raise awareness of a social justice issue.



The response was an overwhelming one with wonderful entries in both the Young Adult and Primary School categories. The winning clips came from Hastings Young Adult Conference and Narromine Mini Vinnies group and are now available on the Vinnies Australia YouTube site for viewing.

The Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council were thrilled to hear that the Mini Vinnies group from St Augustine's Primary School in Narromine were announced as the Primary School winners and showed the video at the Mini Vinnies gathering. Congratulations go to Madie Schmidt, Ahri Wynne, Amber Collins, Claudia Halbisich and Cheyenne Tonkins.

## LISMORE UPDATE

- Lismore Central Council has undertaken various training sessions with over 70 young adult volunteer leaders being trained to run Buddies Days, Kid's Camps and fundraising initiatives.
- Lismore Central Council also developed two new Young Adult Conferences in Port Macquarie and Lismore.
- Two young adult volunteers Jarrod Jacobson from Casino and Ash Glasby from Lismore have been appointed as Twinning Advisors. They will now be responsible for connecting with over 90 overseas Conferences to form relationships and continue ongoing support.



# MEET JASMIN RYAN

Meet one of the passionate members of the Hastings Young Adult Conference

**Name:** Jasmin Ryan

**Age:** 18 years old

**Location:** Port Macquarie, NSW

**Central Council:** Lismore

**Member since:** 2011

### Why did you join Vinnies?

I joined Vinnies because I wanted to give back to the community and I wanted a chance to make a difference. After doing the camp training, I made so many friends and I've never looked back. The people you meet along your journey when volunteering are the most genuine people and both kids and leaders always have a smile on their face. Joining Vinnies was one of the best choices I ever made.

### What programs and activities have you been involved in?

Kid's Camps, Buddies Days, Immersion Programs, Formation events, Teen Camps, Family Camps and co-presenting a talk on homelessness to local high school students. I was also involved in creating a Craft Resource Kit to be used in a children's educational and life skills program as part of a Homework and Healthy Eating Club.

### Tell me about your winning Fred's Film Festival entry.

Our Fred's Film Festival entry is about youth homelessness. In Hastings Young Adult Conference, we discussed issues that we continually see affecting young people in our community and we agreed homelessness is a huge issue. At the time of filming the video, I was also planning a Vinnies School Sleepout and wanted to raise awareness of this issue and promote services in our area that can help young people experiencing homelessness. This has become a big passion of mine.

### What's the most challenging moment you've had whilst volunteering with Vinnies?

I'd have to say the hardest moments usually come for me when I'm on an Immersion Program living with members of a remote community. For some children in these communities their childhood has been so much more challenging than mine; they seem to take on responsibilities and hardships from such a young age. For volunteers, our life experience has been so different.



### What is your most memorable Vinnies moment?

I will always remember the moment I decided that Vinnies was going to be part of me forever at my first State Formation Event in Sydney a couple of months after I joined. At this point I hadn't been on any activities but seeing the passion of the young NSW leaders I met there I knew I wanted to do good works. A funny highlight would be the time I saw a leader really get into games with the kids and they split their pants.

### Why should young people get more involved with Vinnies?

It's so much fun for something that also helps in the community. It's a feel good kind of thing, to make someone smile and to have them tell you that they have had so much fun.



### MINI VINNIES IN ACTION

Over 145 Mini Vinnies students along with 20 teachers from Holy Family Primary School, Parkes; St Joseph's Primary School, Condobolin; and St Laurence's Primary School, Forbes all met together to learn and share ideas about what they are doing in their schools. The gathering featured a talk from keynote speakers about their experiences on a mission to Kenya and Tanzania in 2012 and a social justice workshop covering topics such as homelessness, bullying, migrants and refugees and mental health. The day concluded with presentations from each school about what they had been doing in their Mini Vinnies group. The Wilcannia Forbes Central Council is now planning other Mini Vinnies Gatherings in other regions.

### WILCANNIA FORBES OFFER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Wilcannia Forbes Central Council has for the second year offered a full scholarship to a year six student to attend Red Bend Catholic College, Forbes. The scholarship is awarded to someone who demonstrates their Christian ideals, understanding of Catholic culture and contribution to school and local community. This year the scholarship was awarded to Lilyanne Corke from Bedgerebong.

During her time at school Lilyanne has been involved in representative sports, school choir, choral speech, public speaking, debating and performed at eisteddfods. Lilyanne has won awards for participation in environmental programs and consideration for others and has also been involved in Cubs and collects for the heart foundation each year. Lilyanne hopes to study at university once she finishes high school at Red Bend Catholic College.



### MINI VINNIES NELSON BAY HAS A FLYING START



Mini Vinnies at St Michael's Primary School in Nelson Bay have enjoyed great success in their first year of work. The Mini Vinnies group visited their local Vinnies shop to meet with volunteers and learn about the Society's work, raised money for Vinnies selling toolboxes at their Parish fete and planted a veggie patch at their school. During the Christmas Appeal the group made a Giving Hand Christmas tree where families took gift tags and donated toys for children that their local Vinnies Conference would distribute.



**Over the past two decades, the definition of poverty has evolved from solely measuring a person's income to looking at a range of indicators for social inclusion such as access to health services, education and employment opportunities. These are things which many of us take for granted, but which many Australians are missing out on.**

The Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC) in Woolloomooloo addresses some of these issues by providing people with access to facilities and courses that will help them develop new skills and increase their ability to break down some of the barriers they face to leading independent lives.

With the combined effort from case managers, volunteers and various corporate partners, the OLC is able to provide a range of programs including computer and digital media training, music production, fitness and nutritional cooking classes, art workshops and TAFE accredited courses.

Warren first came to the OLC two years ago after substance abuse and family breakdown saw him moving from one inner city homeless service to another. Warren had nowhere to go and often ended up sleeping rough on the streets.

Warren began attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings at the OLC. Soon he became involved with painting through the art program and then enrolled in a TAFE screen printing course. After completing this course, Warren began accessing the OLC Mac Computer Lab and enrolled in a TAFE digital media course learning about Photoshop programs and how to create digital artworks.

Warren found that using his creativity in a positive and productive way, allowed him to deal with some of the issues he had previously ignored or struggled to cope with.

Feeling stronger, more confident and engaged, Warren eventually moved into independent accommodation and is currently studying a Diploma in Graphic Design at TAFE.

The partnership between the St Vincent de Paul Society and TAFE has proven invaluable for creating pathways for the people we assist to get back into mainstream study and employment.

The OLC continues to provide many people experiencing homelessness the opportunity to access education and begin to explore prospects they would otherwise have missed out on.



# VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT SUCCESS

**The Vinnies CEO Sleepout was once again a great success with 1000 CEOs sleeping out around the country to raise over \$5.7 million for Vinnies homeless services.** In NSW fundraising reached \$2 million. This funding is crucial in helping Vinnies deliver a range of services and programs which address homelessness focusing on person centred care, and early intervention and prevention. Holly Kramer, CEO Best&Less and George Frazis, CEO St George Banking Group shared the title of joint Fundraiser of the Year for 2014. The retail and banking duo raised over \$212,000 each; calling on their respective customers and employees to help break the usually illusive \$200,000 mark. Every year community and business leaders throw their support behind this event giving them an opportunity to not only raise funds to assist the more than 100,000 people

experiencing homelessness in Australia, but to come together to learn more about the complexities of the issue and what we can all do to make a real difference. This year the St Vincent de Paul Society also used the Vinnies CEO Sleepout as a platform to call on state, territory and federal governments to address the housing affordability crisis, a leading cause of homelessness and disadvantage in Australia. The reality is that we have a housing market that produces huge gains for a few whilst driving others deeper into poverty or keeping them in the cycle of homelessness. The story that the Society is hearing at the grassroots level is sobering. With over 5,000 members in 420 communities across New South Wales, the Society is visiting almost 600 people in crisis every day. This places Vinnies in a



Holly Kramer, Best & Less and George Frazis, St George Banking Group



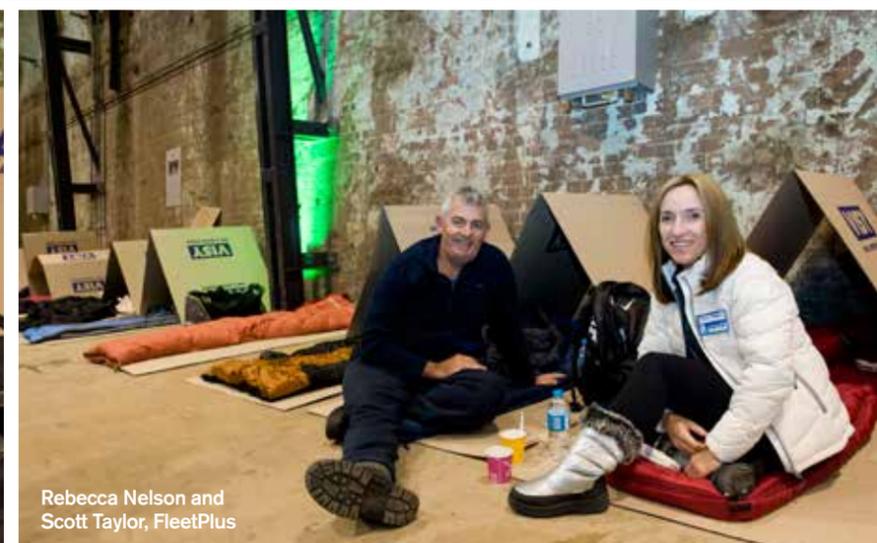
Ray Reynolds, President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



Philip Morphew, Executive Peak Performance and Bernie Fehon, Tactical Solutions



The Hon. Christopher Pyne, Member for Sturt



Rebecca Nelson and Scott Taylor, FleetPlus

unique position to understand the impacts of the housing affordability crisis. The Centre for Affordable Housing found that the number of affordable properties in the private rental market for low-income households in NSW decreased by 37% between 2006 and 2010. In addition, Shelter NSW found that in September 2012 only 10% of rental stock was affordable for very low income households and 27% was affordable for low income households. Successive governments have failed to address the housing affordability crisis. It is now time for action and there needs to be commitment and support from all levels of government. Firstly we call for the development of a formal plan supported by both state and federal governments to increase the supply of affordable housing. Let's

acknowledge that the market will not deliver this on its own. A housing plan will force government to ensure their interventions focus on delivering more affordable housing. Secondly, we need to see the large-scale transfer of the management of public housing stock to community housing providers. Research is now showing that where community housing providers manage these properties it is more efficient and effective. They are also better at creating communities where people can thrive rather than be trapped in a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. Next year the Vinnies CEO Sleepout celebrates its 10th anniversary and we will be calling on previous participants to return to the event as part of our 10 years, \$10 million, 100,000 reasons campaign. **Thank you to our CEOs, partners, sponsors and donors for helping us achieve our 2014 fundraising target.**

# GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

The St Vincent de Paul Society has grave concerns that people already experiencing disadvantage will be pushed further into poverty by measures included in the recent Federal Budget.

The Society believes this is a deeply unfair budget that requires the heavy lifting to be done by those who have the least capacity to do so. The Society knows of the heart-wrenching stories of the people we are assisting. Our great fear is that these stories are about to get far worse.

With this in mind, we are empowering members to speak out strongly for a fairer budget through a grass roots campaign which includes a number of elements:

- Writing a letter to Federal Members of Parliament (MP)
- Signing a Petition and spreading the word
- Collecting powerful stories about the impacts the budget will have on the people we assist
- Visiting your local Federal MP and sharing these stories

The online petition is an easy way for both members and the people we assist to send a strong message to Canberra. People simply need to go to [www.change.org/vinnies-budget](http://www.change.org/vinnies-budget) and sign the petition.



Irene Gough, Social Justice Representative, Lismore Central Council meets her local MP, Member for Clarence, Chris Gulaptis.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW President, Ray Reynolds says, "This social justice movement is a wonderful testament to the grass roots strength of our organisation, providing over 16,000 member and volunteers with an opportunity to speak up and take action locally. By joining together across NSW, we can bring about change."

If you would like any more information please contact Social Justice Coordinator Lukas Rajnoch on [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au).

## NUMBERS TELL A STORY



Last financial year, the Society implemented a new system of collecting and reporting information on the assistance provided to people experiencing disadvantage. Thanks to the efforts of our members in implementing this system, we are now able to develop a better understanding of the people we assist to improve the support we give them and to pinpoint areas in Central Councils that are experiencing the most disadvantage. From this data we are also able to identify patterns in the assistance people require such as energy or telephone bills and the profile of the people we assist including age group and family, income and accommodation status.

If you require training on the new system, please contact Megha Sharma from the Member and Volunteer Engagement Team on (02) 8622 0308.

**Almost one in two people in Australia will experience a mental illness in their lifetime. People living with a mental illness can become disconnected from their friends and the community around them. Some people end up socially isolated and spend a lot of time on their own. This makes recovery from their illness challenging.**

Compeer addresses this isolation by matching someone who is living with a mental illness in a one-to-one friendship with a volunteer. Compeer aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness by encouraging social inclusion and community education.



PHOTO: Acting Mayor of Willoughby City Council, Councillor Gail Giles-Gidney, Broken Bay President Barry Finch, Compeer volunteer Ian, Compeer volunteer Allan, Michael Perusco

# TACKLING ISOLATION

This friendship can have a big impact on the life of someone who is lonely, helping build confidence and a sense of connectedness to the community.

Following an accident that left him out of action for seven weeks, Jim began thinking about the many people who, through illness or injury, lose contact with family and friends and find themselves lonely and isolated.

Wanting to help out, Jim discovered Compeer and decided to volunteer. Volunteers meet with the people living with a mental illness for a minimum of four hours a month as a way of providing social interaction and breaking down the isolation.

Being in his mid-fifties, Jim was matched with similarly aged Thomas. Two and a half years on, neither of them have looked back.

"We meet up once a week for coffee to catch up on what has been happening with our families, work, sport, politics, music, and anything that comes up. Occasionally we go and see a movie or a performance as well."

"Over time we have gotten to know each other much better. My wife and mother both have met him as we went to a musical performance together. Thomas is so easy to get along with and because he is about my age we have similar interests," says Jim.

Having no experience with mental illness before, Jim has developed a greater understanding about people living with a mental illness and a great love of volunteering.

"I did not expect to get such a great sense of satisfaction in doing something for someone else. It is very rewarding," says Jim.

In February Compeer launched their newly produced short video which showcases the story of another volunteer Ian, and his friendship with John, a man in his local community living with mental health issues. The video launch was held in Willoughby and was attended by community members, Willoughby Council Councillors, Compeer staff and volunteers. To get a copy of the Compeer film contact [alexandra.irving@vinnies.org.au](mailto:alexandra.irving@vinnies.org.au).



# REBUILDING TRUST

**From the outside, Carissa seemed to have it all. She was in a happy long-term relationship and was enjoying great success professionally, running her own company.**

What people didn't see was that Carissa had a serious gambling problem that was putting her business, relationship and finances at risk. After her mother passed away, Carissa found herself hiding away from the grief by spending hours at a time playing poker machines.

Carissa was living in a state of denial about her gambling problem and it was not until her business was about to go under that she had to face the stark reality. Carissa made the courageous decision to call Gambling Help, a service that offers free face-to-face counselling for people with gambling problems and their families.

When Carissa first met with Gambling Help counsellors she was full of shame and fear. Counsellors referred her to a financial counselling service as well as a free legal service for people with gambling related issues.

Carissa was determined to overcome her gambling addiction and worked hard on the issues she felt were contributing to her problem. In addition to one-on-one counselling sessions, Carissa and her partner attend a couple's session each week for extra support.

Through counselling and tackling her addiction head-on, Carissa is slowly rebuilding trust with her partner, daughters and broader family. After applying for bankruptcy, Carissa has a new business partner and has started another business.

Carissa continues to abstain from gambling and looks to the future with new found determination.

"Knowing how close I came to losing everything makes me determined to keep on track and live a life free of addiction, secrets and debt," says Carissa.

**If you need support for your gambling problem or know someone who would benefit from Gambling Help contact (02) 9686 1281 or visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au) for more information.**

# EARLY INTERVENTION

**The Metro South West and Wollongong Brokerage programs work closely with people who are struggling to maintain their housing. Case management is provided to people at risk of homelessness to address any financial or emotional issues and people are connected to a range of services to receive specialist and long-term support.**

Michael turned to the Brokerage program after he was diagnosed with a heart condition and could no longer keep up the long hours he had been working as a truck driver. With less income, Michael and his wife Beth were struggling to pay their bills and were facing eviction from their rental property.

The family had too many expenses including white goods rental, household bills, debt repayments and rental payments. Beth was becoming overwhelmed and wanted to file for bankruptcy.

With the threat of homelessness growing, Brokerage case managers worked closely with the family by advocating for reduced rent and a waiving of their eviction deadline. Brokerage also provided financial counselling to the family to help them manage their own budget as well as networked with service providers to manage the family's electricity and phone bills.

Thanks to the support of Brokerage, Michael and his family have regained control of their finances and have been able to stay in their home.



## FACTS ON HOMELESSNESS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

■ The most common reasons for people experiencing homelessness in NSW are financial difficulties (20.5%), accommodation issues (24.9%), domestic violence (33.8%), health (7.5%) and other (13.3%). (*Homelessness NSW*)

■ In NSW, there are 28,190 people experiencing homelessness every night. Most of this increase is attributable to a 64% increase in the number of people living in severely overcrowded dwellings.

■ Rental affordability has hit crisis point around Australia in recent years. 62% of lower-income households in NSW were in housing stress in 2009-10, paying over 30% of their income on housing costs. (*National Housing Supply Council*)

■ The number of affordable properties in the private rental market for low-income households in NSW decreased by 37% between 2006 and 2010. (*Centre for Affordable Housing*)

■ In September 2012 only 10% of rental stock was affordable for very low income households and 27% was affordable for low income households. (*Shelter NSW*)

■ The NSW Housing Register listed 57,451 applicants for public housing as at 30 June 2013, and only 8,585 applicants were housed between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2013.

■ Housing NSW estimates that by 2016, the public waiting list will grow by 60% to 86,532 and that the number of households that are eligible for social housing yet not on the waiting list will be 131,975.

When Kevin first came to the Matthew Talbot Hostel over 20 years ago, he never would have imagined in a million years that on a hot summers Sydney day he would be hosting tea for the then Governor General of Australia, Mrs Quentin Bryce at the well-known service in Woolloomooloo.



# BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

It was in October 2012 that Kevin first met the Governor General when he was invited to join one of the Matthew Talbot staff for an event at Admiralty House to mark Anti-Poverty Week.

"I was excited but a little bit nervous", says Kevin of the experience.

"At the end of the event I plucked up the courage and asked the Governor General if I could invite her for tea at my home at the Matthew Talbot Hostel someday. It was a dream come true when she accepted."

A quick thinker and talker, Kevin proudly gave Mrs Bryce a tour of the Talbot and adjacent education Centre, the Ozanam Learning Centre. He told her about all the programs that were on offer to people who were experiencing homelessness including the art program, which Kevin is an active participant in.

"I think the Governor General was very impressed with some of the artworks we've produced as she bought a ceramic plate and bowl to take with her."

The former Governor General visited Kevin at the Matthew Talbot Hostel again last December.

On her second visit, Kevin quickly got Mrs Bryce up to speed on what he had been doing since he last saw her.

Now living in residential housing, Kevin still accesses the centre regularly to catch up with his friends, meet his case manager and to take part in a range of educational and art programs.

"I love writing poetry, sculpting and doing creative things and I've started writing a book", says Kevin.

"I'm sure it will include a chapter about the day a man without a home asked the Governor General to tea".



One of Kevin's sculptures

# CHARLES GORDON O'NEILL

**Charles Gordon O'Neill was a brilliant young Irish Scot engineer and architect, a man torn between professional ambition and desire to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ to serve the poor.**

As a brilliant young architect in Glasgow, at just 30 years of age, Charles O'Neill led volunteers to assist thousands of that city's poorest citizens through the St Vincent de Paul Society. But following a period of financial misfortune and mistrust, he boarded the Brechin Castle for a wild colonial ride to New Zealand, where he was also instrumental in establishing the Society.

The tide of fortune waned once again and Charles set out at age 52, on yet another great quest to the Australian colonies. It was a quest set against the squalor of Sydney's Rocks district, with its poverty stricken slums.

It was there that Charles raised a legion of followers and in 1881, at St Patrick's Church Hill in Sydney's Rocks district, started the St Patrick's Conference, the very first group of members of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

Over the next decade, Charles's vision and good work spread across New South Wales, just as the 1890s depression was about to hit.

Charles O'Neill's commitment to spiritual values, in the face of the pandemonium of mid-19th century politics, the making of fortunes and technological wonder, generated a culture of giving and support for people living in poverty, which is still a central part of Australian society today.

Today, the St Vincent De Paul Society has 16,000 members and volunteers helping people experiencing disadvantage in 420 communities across NSW, carrying out the vision of Charles Gordon O'Neill each and every day.



# LIVING HIS DREAM

**The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in partnership with Settlement Services International (SSI) was recently awarded the tender to deliver Ability Links across 23 local government areas in inner Sydney, Metro Sydney South West, Sutherland Shire and Southern Highland region.**

Ability Links is contributing to the objectives of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and is a new approach of the NSW Government to foster full and active participation of people with disability in their community.

Ability Links Coordinators, known as Linkers, will work to provide information and support to people with disability, their families and carers, and their local communities. Linkers will work in connecting local communities in order to shape a more inclusive society for people with disability and their families.

Last year the Society was the successful auspice for delivering Ability Links in the Hunter region of NSW. The goal of Ability Links is to create a society where people are not identified by their disabilities and enjoy inclusive lives in all spheres.

One inspiring young man, who we met after last year's Vinnies CEO Sleepout demonstrates just this. Nathan Basha has Down Syndrome but that is not who he is. The 22 year old motivational speaker is pushing the boundaries on preconceptions around people with disability. Nathan is paving the way for other young people to reach their full potential as Ability Links also hopes to do.

Every person has a unique dream and Nathan is living his made possible by his family who did not put limits on what Nathan was capable.

As he grew older and explored interests like swimming and attended a mainstream school Nathan was able to develop a sense of who he is and what his preferences were, just like his brothers. Nathan was given the opportunity to succeed and to fail, to learn his strengths and to build on those.

Throughout his journey sometimes Nathan has needed support to explore his interests and employment. To do this Nathan would first plan what was needed and then move to what support would be required.



Nathan Basha

As Nathan has matured the number of wonderful people who have provided him with guidance has expanded and Nathan is planning on making this network more formal as he embraces his next adventure.

Nathan has been living his dream with a fulfilling school experience, trying out possible career paths, participating in an inclusive Education Pilot at the University of Sydney where he has been studying history and film as well as working at a prominent Sydney radio station and considering plans to move out of home.

Having a clear vision of what he wants and high expectations for himself has made it possible for Nathan to embrace emerging opportunities.

On top of his other commitments Nathan travels around as a speaker for audiences, clients and staff looking to think creatively and to believe that they can achieve anything. Nathan has spoken around Australia and internationally to a wide variety of groups including school students, teachers, corporates, and youth groups and is always willing to share his story.

Nathan believes that everyone has a right to lead a fulfilling life. Through his work as a motivational speaker Nathan asks people to consider giving others the same opportunities that he has been given to reach their full potential.

Nathan says, "I hope that by living my dream, I give others the courage to do the same."

## PATHWAYS OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

### SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES (SHS) TENDERS

**As part of the NSW State Governments 'Going Home, Staying Home Reform Plan' and recent retender for Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), the Minister for Family and Community Services announced the outcomes in June.**

The Society was successful in obtaining funding for thirteen Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) packages and will operate as sole provider for services in areas including; Sydney Eastern Suburbs; St George Sutherland; Inner City Sydney; Macarthur; Inner West Sydney; Newcastle and Armidale amongst others. Additionally, as part of a consortium, the Society will also deliver services in Northern NSW and the Southern Murrumbidgee regions. The announcement also included a restoration of funding to Inner City Sydney.

Going Home Staying Home (GHSH) is part of the NSW Government's focus on improving early intervention and prevention services in regards to homelessness. These reforms aim to make it easier for people to access services that meet their needs and will also ensure resources are distributed where they are most needed rather than based on historical funding arrangements.

Similarly, the Society has been preparing for these changes for a long time. Based on the Society's extensive experience in delivering homeless services and following stakeholder consultations, the Society has developed a new service delivery model in line with NSW Government's Reform Plan.

The Society's new model will enable us to intervene early to prevent individuals and families slipping through the net and falling into homelessness; rapidly rehouse people who have just become homeless; and find long-term housing solutions for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

One of our strengths as an organisation is our capacity to identify people at risk of homelessness via our members. The Society is actively looking at how we can better resource Central Councils through this tender process as well as improve referral processes between members' activities and SHS services.

We know our Conferences provide a significant level of support for those people who are struggling financially who may be at risk of homelessness. This work has been carried out for over 150 years and has laid important building

blocks for the delivery of this new approach to addressing homelessness.

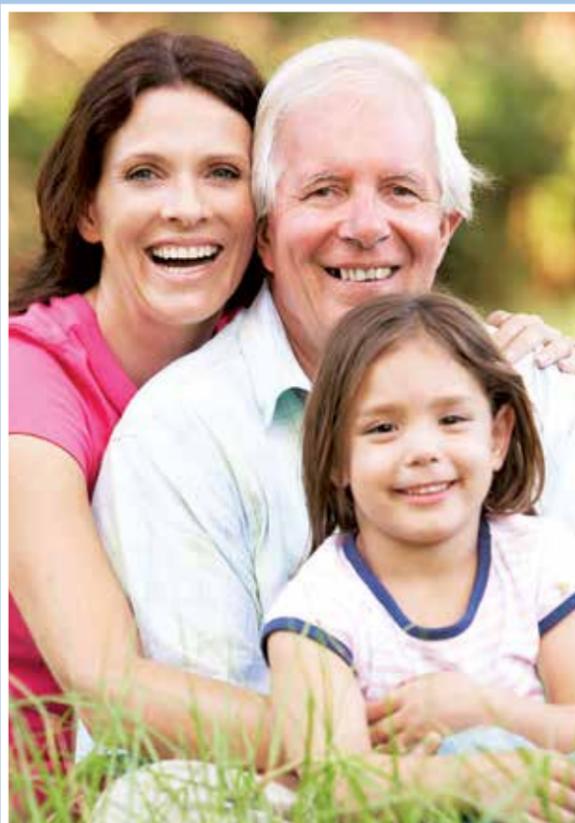
Through the new SHS model, we aim to integrate the work of members into the Society's services to provide the best care and support and possible outcomes for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Under the new model, a centralised access point will link people needing help to mobile multi-disciplinary case management teams who will assess and support people wherever they may be living; whether in a home or sleeping rough. This will ensure a rapid and more effective response.

Importantly, the model combines immediate intervention, with long-term and flexible 'wrap around' support to better equip people to achieve sustainable housing, improved well-being and connection to the community so they can put the experience of homelessness or the risk of homelessness behind them forever.

Our long-term aim is to leverage our model to significantly reduce the number of people becoming homeless in the first place and to find long-term housing solutions for those experiencing temporary or chronic homelessness.





## REMEMBER THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY IN YOUR WILL

Show your commitment and support for people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness by leaving a gift in your Will to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

Should you like to discuss this opportunity confidentially or would like further information, please call the Society's Bequest Coordinator, Heather Roberts on (02) 8622 0304. This is a great opportunity to leave a legacy that will change lives in the future.

# NORTH COAST REFUGEE SETTLEMENT SERVICE

**North Coast Refugee Settlement Service, a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society Lismore Central Council is a support program assisting refugees and migrants newly arrived in the North Coast community. The program is based in Coffs Harbour and Lismore and provides outreach to Ballina and Tweed Heads.**

The North Coast Refugee Settlement Service provides case management, advocacy, information and referral, community information, volunteer mentoring and community development. The Lismore Central Council also provides financial support for driving and English lessons and other social activities. In the last financial year Lismore Central Council assisted 34 people with 10 driving lessons each to prepare them for their driving tests.



# THE LOVING BOUNTY OF GOD

**A recurring theme that Pope Francis has brought to people of good will has been the plight of those living in poverty, the enormous gap between people with much and those with little or nothing.** The Holy Father insists that he is not speaking just about material goods but rather about the "absolute priority of going forth from ourselves towards our brothers and sisters". If the providence of God in creation is so abundant, how could we as part of that creation be mean, closed or selfish?

The Gospel is also a message of joy about life: *Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.* (Evangeli Gaudium, #6)

*If we are to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves, we also have to realise that every person is worthy of our giving. Not for their physical appearance, their abilities, their language, their way of thinking, or for any satisfaction that we might receive but rather because they are God's handiwork, his creation.* (Ev.Gau. #274)

Dom Helder Camara was the archbishop of Recife in Brazil. Like Francis, he became an advocate of the cause of the many people living in poverty in his own country and in everywhere in the world. He turned his awareness into a prayer for generosity of spirit.

*Lord, isn't your creation wasteful?  
Fruits never equal the seedlings' abundance  
Springs scatter water  
The sun gives out enormous light.  
May your bounty teach me  
Greatness of heart.  
May your magnificence  
Stop me being mean.  
Seeing you a prodigal and open-handed giver  
Let me give unstintingly...  
Like God's own.*

# HILTON SYDNEY SERVES UP HOPE



Thank you to our generous partner Hilton Sydney for serving up hope to thousands of people experiencing homelessness through their support of the Sydney Night Patrol and the Matthew Talbot Hostel.



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*