

# The Record

AUTUMN 2025



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

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## THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL RECORD

Vol. 15.

APRIL 1st, 1950.

No. 4.

**A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**  
*What virtue is more necessary to a Christian association  
than humility?*

*St. Vincent de Paul Manual.*

### *Featured in this Issue*

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**St Vincent de Paul Society**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

The Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

This logo represents the hand of Christ that blesses the cup, the hand of love that offers the cup, and the hand of suffering that receives the cup.

The Record is published regularly each quarter by the National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia.

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The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia acknowledges that we are on Aboriginal land. We pay respects to all traditional custodians. This publication may contain images of deceased Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. They are used with the greatest respect and appreciation.

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the publishers.

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**Contributions welcome.** Perhaps you would like to write or suggest a story and share photos with our readers. We can't track everything happening across the Society, so your involvement would be appreciated. Please contact [media@svdp.org.au](mailto:media@svdp.org.au) to discuss your ideas.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 45,000 Members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.



**Available online:**  
[vinnies.link/TheRecord](http://vinnies.link/TheRecord)

# Back in the day...

In the years up to 1974, *The St Vincent de Paul Record*, our forerunner publication, was published monthly but unlike today, when it is free, or perhaps we should say 'priceless', it came with a cover price, in the case of the issue on our cover, threepence per copy.

In those days, production and printing were performed at St Vincent's Boy's Home in the Sydney suburb of Westmead.

Historical copies of the publication, archived in the Society's National Council Secretariate office in Canberra, make for some inspiring and fascinating reading.

The depicted issue of 1 April 1950 reported on three new Conferences being established at Wagga Wagga, NSW and the founding of a Catholic stamp collecting group. A lengthy story on port clubs for seafarers said the lonely men would appreciate male and female companionship with whom to 'expound their views on world problems and the ultimate end of man'. Apparently, being at sea made for a gloomy disposition.

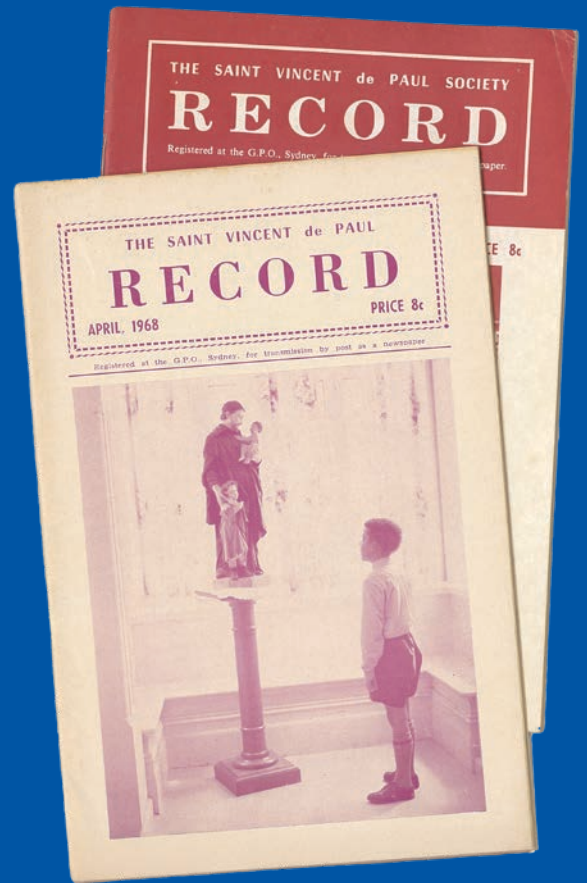
Sandwiched between these diverse stories and black-and-white ads for David Jones menswear, insurance companies and monumental masons, came an editorial headed 'Two Men', which recounted the lives of Saint Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

'St Vincent was a priest; Frédéric a layman, who, notwithstanding the responsibilities of marriage and a brilliant professional career, found time to give abundantly of himself to his less fortunate fellow citizens... one living the full allotted span, one dying ere he reached middle age - so much different in their lives in many ways and yet so much the same in their practical expression of charity...

'These two men left an example: let all our members study it and make an honest attempt to follow it'.

Some sentiments never change, and Hallelujah! to that.

It may be noted that the Archdiocese of Perth also publishes a magazine titled *The Record*, which can be accessed at [www.therecord.com.au](http://www.therecord.com.au). Like our magazine, it is a member of the Australasian Catholic Press Association.



## Travelling as Pilgrims of Hope

BY LEO TUCKER

Executive Director  
Mission and Formation,  
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

The liturgical cycle for 2025 follows in general the Gospel of Luke (Year C) with Easter falling a little later in April. Much voice throughout this year will be given to the prayerful discernments of the Synod on Synodality and this special year of Grace as a Jubilee Year.

Pope Francis officially declared 2025 a Year of Jubilee with a papal bull, titled *Spes Non Confudit*, meaning 'Hope Does Not Disappoint.' The Jubilee Year began with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve 2024.

The theme of the jubilee is 'pilgrims of hope', as the Pope is calling on all Catholics to renew in the hope of Christ, using St. Paul the Apostle as a guide for this special year.

'Everyone knows what it is to hope,' His Holiness said. 'In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt.'

'Often, we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness.'

'For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope. Taking it as our guide, let us return to the message that the Apostle Paul wished to communicate to the Christians of Rome.'



In the papal bull, Pope Francis also decreed Sunday, 29 December for the celebration of Mass to mark the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year, which will officially end with the closing of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica on 6 January 2026, the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

'During the Holy Year, may the light of Christian hope illumine all humanity, as a message of God's love addressed to all!, the Pope said. 'And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!'

Finally, as *The Rule* states, 'Vincentians serve with hope', and may this special year of jubilee enhance our service and encourage us with the year's extraordinary graces. **R**



## ***Our Aspiration is for an Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice.***

**- The Rule**

Welcome dear friends to the first edition of *The Record* for 2025. Once again, the Society, as a lay Catholic organisation, with the continued commitment of Members supported by our staff and volunteers, will continue in its mission of serving those in need and promoting social justice.

I hope and pray that 2025 brings us closer to achieving our goal of building a more just and compassionate society.

The Federal Government handed down its 2025 Budget in anticipation of the Federal Election date being announced. The Society is well prepared for a national advocacy program based on our social priorities (see article on page 8). These priorities aim to encourage all candidates to announce policies that will deliver justice to those in need.

The Society's advocacy campaign for the 2025 Federal Election is titled 'Justice and Compassion'. The policy areas agreed by National Council to promote are as follows:

- Supporting a safety net for all Australians
- Housing security across the country
- Meeting the needs of First Nations Peoples
- Rising to the refugee challenge

I would like to welcome two new Members to National Council. Firstly, Rebecca (Bec) Bromhead from Queensland who accepted my invitation to take on the role of Vice President – Oceania. This new role on National Council will assist our long-term plans/work around supporting our fellow Vincentians and their work across the Oceania region. Members will recall Bec played a role in supporting the Society via her participation in Congress 23+ in Sydney.

Secondly, I would like welcome Ashley Carvalho from Western Australia who has agreed to take on the role of Vice-President – Youth. Ashley has worked with many young Members and leaders across Australia and has been a member for over 15 years.

Ashley is deeply committed to Catholic Social Teaching and living out the Gospel message through service to others. Her long-standing involvement with the Society reflects her alignment with its values, and she says she is eager to bring her gifts, charisms, and passions to continue to contribute to our mission.

In welcoming Bec and Ashley, I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to Pat Wallis whose time with National Council has come to an end after six years of faithful service. During his time on National Council, Pat could be relied upon to advocate fiercely for the Society's youth programs, both in Australia and across the Oceania region. Best wishes for the future, Pat.

Over the past 12 months, National Council has been tasked with opportunities to explore what it means for the Society to be a lay Catholic organisation and the centrality of Catholic Social Teaching in how we interact in the contemporary world. This process has culminated in the development of *The Vincentian Way*.

*The Vincentian Way* is a wonderful example of collaboration involving National Council, and a drafting group of Society Members and employees drawn from our mission and spirituality spaces. The latter stages of this process involved consultation with our Chief Executive Officers. Over the coming weeks I look forward to visiting and introducing *The Vincentian Way* to our eight State and Territory Councils, related corporate entities and employee leadership teams.

Finally, I was thrilled to hear of Pope Francis's recovery and discharge from hospital following an extended and at times worrying period of ill health. Dare I suggest that millions of prayers have been instrumental in his recovery, alongside a devoted and highly capable medical team. **R**



At the time of writing this column, Australians are about to go to a Federal Election. The St Vincent de Paul Society is politically neutral (*The Rule*, Part I, #7.8) but by no means disengaged from the law and policy making that guides the running of Australia.

When we advocate, we are never 'party political' and I preface my column with this caveat as I reflect on the past three years and look towards the coming parliamentary term from the perspective of the growing number of Australians who are living in our new world of increased personal stress and lack of hope for better days for themselves and their children.

When Prime Minister Albanese formed his government in May 2022, he made three commitments. During his term as the country's leader: no one would be left behind 'because we should always look after the disadvantaged and the vulnerable'; an aspirational approach will underpin policy development; and social policy will better connect to economic policy. The ink on the sticky label below my computer screen has faded since I captured these promises three years ago.

As soon as the Albanese ministry was sworn in, it seems every minister embarked on a comprehensive review of Commonwealth programs. There was a slow start and a lack of clarity around the outcomes these reviews were designed to deliver. Unfortunately, our public service had been emasculated; the result of previous governments' preference to downsize Australia's historical reliance on civil society careers which brought policy expertise, and outsource the work to big consultancies, often multinationals, that usually brought a one-size-fits all approach.

Without having ready access to our nation's valuable public servants' knowledge and skills, the pace of these reviews was challenging. Lack of corporate policy knowledge resulted in a need to rediscover how the government could better explore new ways of listening and responding to the expression of local communities' needs.

Since 2022, the communities and the Not-for-profit sector have reeled from the impacts of the Black Summer Bushfires, later the COVID pandemic and then a succession of natural disasters.

But, looking back over the past 15 years, our colleagues across the charitable sector have well identified that government funding has been inadequate to deliver services contracted by the Commonwealth.

In 2022, we were promised multiple reviews that would

bring better outcomes for people in need in local communities and that grants would better reflect actual costs. The cost-of-living crisis that swept through in late 2023 brought new and permanent pressures on how the sector can continue to deliver supports using less funds.

A commitment to co-design with communities and the Not-for-profit sector was very slow to gain traction, but it did, albeit under a bushel.

At the same time, the 'tin rattlers' do appreciate that no domestic government is immune from the huge impost on their budget's bottom line when trying to bring a human side to addressing the rising costs faced by Australia's forgotten families.

Despite the political rhetoric of recent years, the Commonwealth can exercise very little control over the internationally connected elements that reach into our economy. We know we need to be smarter and more efficient.

In this environment, major charities like the Society and local community-based charities are having to rely more on supporters and those who believe in 'a fairer Australia' to help a rising tide of ordinary Australians, who, through no fault of their own, are desperately in need.

Australia's charitable sector has been patiently waiting for the Albanese Government to commit to a 10-year blueprint that will make charities stronger and resilient again. We want all elected members of the Parliament to make a commitment to advance the proposals outlined in the [Not-for-profit Sector Development Blueprint](#). This involves a statutory authority to oversee the implementation plan for the next 10 years.

The feedback we get from our Members about what Joe and Joleen Citizens need most is a plan that will firstly tackle the negative impact of the cost-of-living crisis and secondly move to deliver realistic support initiatives that are founded on a preferential option. Such a plan is more than words uttered during election campaigning. It is comprehensive and relies on in-house policy and operational expertise capacity of overseeing and delivering a fairer, more compassionate society.

Let us pray that our incoming government, whatever that may look like, continues to draw on the roadmap the NFP sector researched to build a stronger sector that in turn strengthens the glue that holds all of us together in this wonderful and free Australia. **R**

## Society appoints new Vice President – Oceania...

In mid-January, **Bec Bromhead** was appointed to the new role of Vice President – Oceania, focused on exploring how St Vincent de Paul Society can continue to walk in solidarity with, and support, communities seeking justice in neighbouring countries of the Pacific.

In 1998, Bec's journey with the Society began in her high school Conference in Canberra. Throughout university, she was part of a young adult conference, running kids' camps, activity days and sports teams. She sat on the (then) NSW/ACT State Council and Board as the Youth Representative.

She first worked for the Society as the National Council's World Youth Day Coordinator and went on to join the NSW State Council office as the State Youth and Young Adults Coordinator.

Following these roles, Bec took up two secondments for the Society in Southern Africa, supporting three National Councils to develop their youth and twinning/Assist a Student programs. Her love for international partnerships and solidarity led to her study and work in international development and participating in the National Overseas Partnerships Advisory Committee.

Bec holds a BA/BSc (International Relations/Environmental Management), ANU, a B.Ed. (Secondary), CSU and a Masters of International Development, RMIT.

Bec's Vincentian identity is a significant part of her life and she has been part of Conferences in Canberra, Johannesburg, Sydney and now Brisbane. She is passionate about the Society being an avenue for people to live their faith, as Saint Vincent said, 'by the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brow', as well as being a pathway to initiating or exploring deeper spirituality.

She believes that many people in the community are hungry for connection, for ways to serve others in our world through an aligned values-base and are seeking meaning in their lives.

'The Society has a unique gift to offer our Church and our world in these areas. While Conference membership is very important to me, I've also been blessed with the opportunity to live my Vincentian service in quite diverse ways and I think that's important to acknowledge,' Bec says.

In her new role as Vice President - Oceania, Bec will be exploring how we can continue to walk in solidarity with those seeking justice and help ensure a strong and accessible Vincentian presence in communities.

Bec lives in Brisbane with her husband and two young children and is currently coordinating an NGO consortium that provides services for people seeking asylum. **R**

## ... and a Vice-President – Youth

**Ashley Carvalho's** journey with the Society began in 2009 when she volunteered with the Sacred Heart College Vinnies School Conference in Perth. It was here that she discovered her passion for the Society's work, sparking a lifelong commitment to service.

Building on this foundation, Ashley became involved in her local parish Conference and actively engaged with the state's youth programs, offering mentorship and recreation to kids doing it tough.

In 2017, Ashley participated in the Society's Encounter Program, which took her to a remote Indigenous community in the Northern Territory where she helped organise community-building activities for both adults and children.

In 2024, she joined the National Spirit of Youth executive committee, where she served as the chair of the Encounter Program. Between 2023 and 2025, while living in Brisbane, Ashley was a part of Western Youth Programs, her local parish Conference, and the St Thomas Virtual Youth Conference.

Outside of her volunteer work, Ashley works full-time

for a not-for-profit focused on preventing the online sexual exploitation of children. In this role, she develops capacity-building and prevention programs, both domestically and internationally, collaborating with various stakeholders to create a unified approach to child protection.

Ashley is an active participant in Church ministry and is currently pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies at the Australian Catholic University through the Australian Young Catholic Women's Fellowship, an initiative of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

Ashley is excited to step into this leadership role and work alongside passionate, driven youth Members. 'The energy, enthusiasm, and dedication that each individual brings to the Society is truly inspiring, and I look forward to fostering an environment where everyone can continue to grow, collaborate, and make a meaningful impact. Together, we will build on the strong foundation already in place, striving for even greater achievements and empowering each other to reach new heights. It's an honour to be part of this journey, and I can't wait to see what we will accomplish together.' Ashley says. **R**

Read more about Bec, Ashley and our other National Council Members on our website, [vinnies.link/National-Council-Members](https://vinnies.link/National-Council-Members)



**Marking the Society's 170 years of service in Australia at Government House, Victoria were (l-r) Tom Quinn, Board Chair, Vincentcare Community Housing, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, Dr Jenny Fitzgerald AM, Group Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria, and Michael Quinn, State President, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria**

## Milestone marked at Government House, Victoria

On 18 February 2025, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, hosted a gathering at Government House marking the conclusion of a year-long celebration of 170 years of the Society's dedicated service in Australia.

The event honoured the many contributions of the Society's Members, volunteers, donors and employees – individuals who form the heart of our mission. It provided a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the Society's impact and the deep sense of purpose that has sustained its mission for nearly two centuries.

The Governor spoke about the origins of St Vincent de Paul Society, reflecting on how its beginnings were rooted in faith, determination and a deep commitment to serving people in need. She acknowledged the Society's humble yet ambitious beginnings in 19th century France and recognised the dedication of our Members and volunteers, serving on the front lines to meet the growing needs of our community.

State President, Michael Quinn, reminded attendees that, as Father Gerald Ward did 170 years ago, we are rising to the challenge with a mission to expand our services across the state to ensure that no Victorian in need is ever left behind.

As a sign of our appreciation, the Society presented the Governor with Philodendron plants grown by Garry Liakoureas, a former companion who has rebuilt his life with the support of Ozanam House, and whose journey is a testament to the transformative power of compassion.

The event was a chance to connect, share stories and strengthen the bonds that unite our community. Members, volunteers and donors came together to celebrate, reflect and reaffirm their shared commitment to supporting Victorians in need.

This gathering was more than just a celebration of history – it was a testament to the enduring spirit of compassion and service that continues to drive the Society forward. **R**

## A winning vote for Justice and Compassion

***‘Justice is a fixed star which human societies try to follow from their uncertain orbits. It can be seen from different points of view, but justice itself remains unchanged.’***

– Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

### BY ROSE BEYNON

St Vincent de Paul Society’s National Director of Policy and Advocacy

In the lead up to the last Federal Election (2022), St Vincent de Paul Society’s National Council released a policy statement, [A Fairer Australia](#), covering five social justice priorities. These policies have been maintained since the election and now cover First Nations Peoples, Income Support, Poverty and Debt, Housing and Homelessness, People Seeking Asylum, Secure Work, Taxation and Welfare Reform and Gambling Reform. More information on [Let’s Build a Fairer Australia!](#) is available on our [website](#).

For the 2025 Federal Election, the Society has updated the policy suite under the title *Justice & Compassion*, qualities that embody the spirituality of our founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. This platform focusses on four priority areas:

- **Supporting a safety net for all Australians**  
‘If the test of a just and compassionate society is measured by how it treats those living in poverty or who are marginalised, then Australia – regarded as one of the world’s richest countries – is failing... an increase to the base rate of working age payments would lift recipients out of poverty.’
- **Housing security across the country**  
‘The Society calls for housing to be recognised as a human right and the National Housing and homelessness Plan to be legislated... a doubling of the Housing Australia Future Fund... taxation reform to incentivise the use of long-term vacant residential properties and land... support for energy efficiency in low-income households...’
- **Meeting the needs of First Nations Peoples**  
‘Commonwealth leadership to progress the Uluru Statement from the Heart... full implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap... the age of criminal responsibility to be raised to at least 14 years of age...’
- **Rising to the refugee challenge**  
‘An adequate safety net for all asylum seekers... resettlement of all people still subject to offshore processing... increases to the annual humanitarian intake to at least 27,000 by 2027-28, reform of the family reunion program...’

The Society’s guiding document, [The Rule](#), notes that the Mission calls on Members to work to shape a more just and compassionate society.

‘Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures, or to inadequate or unjust legislation, we should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements,’ it reads.

In a recent message to the Society’s membership, National President Mark Gaetani conceded that, ‘Advocacy may not always be easy, even if the policies we have developed are well researched, informed by Catholic Social Teaching and based on social justice principles.’

Noting that, ‘People have varying opinions and that is only to be expected in a democracy,’ he stressed that, ‘Advocacy is one of the Society’s core Values’ and promised it would continue to work to address the causes of poverty and human injustice.

St Vincent de Paul Society’s core *Justice & Compassion* policies are an action plan outlining governmental reforms that, if enacted, would enable more Australians to reach their full life potential by reducing inequality, lifting people out of poverty and improving their physical and emotional wellbeing.

For this reason, Members are being encouraged to engage with leading local candidates to explain and discuss the Society’s policies and to see how they align – or even might influence – those of the aspiring MPs or Senators.

‘Your knowledge of the issues in your local area needs to be heard by all those who seek political office and who are putting themselves forward as representatives of their communities,’ Mr Gaetani told Members.





# Pre-election Budget a 'mixed picture'

'We are obliged to speak for the voiceless and to advocate on their behalf,' he added.

'Sometimes this means challenging the 'status quo', discussing matters that are uncomfortable and that others might not want to hear. Importantly, we are politically neutral when we advocate and are never 'party political' in our discussions with sitting Members, Senators or standing candidates.'

The Society's policy positions are based on its Members' feedback, including through National Council's Social Justice Advisory Committee and other state and territory social justice groups, the Vincentian Refugee Network, and the experiences of its Companions (those whom it serves) and staff. Policy positions are also informed by the Society's founder and Catholic Social Teaching and have also been validated by the extensive social policy evidence base that now exists in Australia.

The Society's website provides a leaflet explaining the key asks in detail as well as a booklet summarising the background and rationale for why change is needed. The *2025 Federal Election Justice and Compassion Statement* will be promoted during the campaign period through social media and other communications channels.

'Our advocacy voice is strong because we speak with one voice to politicians and to the electorate on matters that adversely impact our Companions,' Mark Gaetani said.

'In the words of our inspiration, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, 'We should speak out clearly against injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion.' While he voiced these sentiments many years ago, and in a faraway place, they are a valuable guide to approaching our country's modern democratic process.' **R**

## **Response to Federal Budget 2025-26, delivered by Treasurer Jim Chalmers on 26 March 2025.**

The 2025-26 Federal Budget presents a mixed picture for Australians experiencing hardship. While there are positive steps in health, education, and some social services, key areas of concern—such as income support, housing, and support for people seeking asylum—remain largely unaddressed.

We welcome the Budget's investment in public health, including \$8.4 billion to expand bulk billing, additional urgent care clinics, and funding for hospitals and cheaper medicines. Increased support for early childhood education, wage increases for aged care and childcare workers, and targeted measures to improve economic opportunities for First Nations Peoples are also encouraging developments.

However, despite these gains, many Australians struggling with cost-of-living pressures will continue to face challenges. JobSeeker and other working-age payments remain inadequate, with no further increase beyond previous adjustments, leaving them well below the poverty line. The Society has long called for a meaningful rise in income support to help people meet essential costs and lift more Australians out of poverty.

Similarly, housing remains a critical issue. The Budget includes \$1.0 billion for crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence and at-risk youth, which is a welcome commitment. However, there was no increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance or additional funding to expand social housing, despite growing rental stress and homelessness across the country.

We continue to advocate for long-term investment in affordable and social housing, as well as energy efficiency upgrades for low-income households to reduce ongoing costs.

For First Nations communities, the additional \$1.3 billion investment in Closing the Gap initiatives will support job creation, economic development, and community services but it is over six years. As the Productivity Commission recently concluded, governments have not taken enough meaningful action to meet their commitments under the Agreement.

One area of significant concern remains the Status Resolution Support Service for people seeking asylum. Funding for this essential service, which provides basic financial assistance to those awaiting visa outcomes, has been reduced by 93 per cent since 2015-16, to just \$20 million. Without adequate support, many are left in vulnerable situations, relying on charities to meet their basic needs. Ensuring a fair and sustainable safety net for all remains a key priority for the Society.

The Budget's tax cuts (\$17 billion) and energy bill relief (\$1.8 billion) will go to all Australians, not just those in need. We would have preferred to have seen tax reform rather than tax cuts, and investment in energy efficiency, rather than energy bill relief.

Finally, the Not-for-profit sector has also missed out. Volunteering is an essential part of our society yet no funds were allocated towards the National Strategy for Volunteering or to implementing reforms contained in the [Not-for-profit Sector Development Blueprint](#) and the [Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Philanthropy](#).

While the Budget makes some progress in key areas, more work is needed to build a fairer and more inclusive Australia. The Society will continue to advocate for policies that provide dignity, stability, and opportunity for all Australians, particularly those experiencing financial hardship and disadvantage. **R**

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Mirielle Augustin, Policy & Advocacy, SVdP National Council Secretariate

## North Queenslanders facing long flood recovery journey

St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland has warned that recovery could take years for flood-impacted residents across northern Queensland, but it's not a journey they need to go through alone.

Far North Queensland President Veronica Innes said recovery will be a slow and arduous journey, but not an impossible one.

'We still receive regular requests from people who were hit by Cyclone Jasper, and that was back in December 2023,' she said.

'It can be a very slow process and it's important we all support our communities through it.'

Townsville President Brian Headford said volunteer Members across impacted regions had already started to deliver clothing, food, bedding and school supplies to impacted regions, but said the real work begins once the floods waters clear.

**'We look after each other – that's the Queensland way'**

- SVdP Qld CEO Kevin Mercer

'Our focus is on supporting residents with long-term recovery,' he said.

'Thankfully some of the highways, including to Ingham, have re-opened and we can start to deliver resources in regional impacted areas.'

SVdP Queensland CEO Kevin Mercer said it was important that impacted residents did not have to face the long journey of recovery alone.

'St Vincent de Paul Society has more than 130 years' experience helping Queenslanders through extreme weather events, from floods to bushfires. Once the flood waters start to recede, we expect there will be thousands of residents faced with the task of rebuilding their homes and their lives.

'Our Members will be there to support those impacted with long-term recovery efforts,' Mr Mercer said.

'There will come a time when the waters have receded and disasters like these begin to fade from the news and the rest of the country will seem to have moved on. But the financial, physical, and emotional impacts will still be felt by residents of North Queensland for months and even years to come.

'Regional Queenslanders are known for their strength and courage – but I do encourage anyone feeling overwhelmed to not be afraid to reach out for help. We are tough, but we still look after each other – that's the Queensland way.'

Financial donations to support impacted residents can be made at [vinnies.org.au/northqldfloodappeal2025](https://vinnies.org.au/northqldfloodappeal2025) **R**

## More help to handle debt

In mid-January, the Australian Government launched a new National Debt Helpline (NDH), costed at \$44.1 million over five years, aimed at assisting vulnerable people experiencing financial stress to manage their finances.

St Vincent de Paul Society WA was successful in retaining the NDH contract in WA for the next five years.

'More than 200,000 people will be supported to navigate financial crises and build their financial capability, wellbeing and resilience as a result of the funding,' said the Minister for Social Services, Amanda Rishworth, adding that the investment reflected the Government's commitment to supporting Australians most at risk of financial and social disadvantage.

'This funding is vital for those struggling to receive help to manage their finances, reduce debt and build a stronger, more secure future for themselves, their families and communities,' the Minister said.

The NDH provides free, accessible financial counselling services for people experiencing financial difficulties, or to help find solutions and manage their debt.

Contact can be made via phone or online through web chats.

Funding of \$27.4 million will be distributed between eight organisations to support the National Debt Helpline, along with the expansion of an online booking system trialled in SA, WA and the NT, so people who need support can get it in a way that best suits them.

Financial Counselling Australia will also receive \$16.7 million to support the NDH with coordination and training and other programs to assist the needs of Australians in financial difficulty – ensuring staff have the most up to date resources to best support Australians using the service.

Further information on financial services, including how to find financial wellbeing providers, is available on the [Department of Social Services website](https://www.socialservices.gov.au). Help is available through the National Debt Helpline via calling 1800 007 007 or visiting [ndh.org.au](https://ndh.org.au). **R**



*Dan McKenna, CEO of Housing All Australians, Anthea Dimitrakopoulos from Ascott Limited Australia and the Society's Tasmania State President, Corey McGrath.*

## Amelie House gets \$500,000 furniture donation

Amelie House, a new transitional housing facility for women at risk of homelessness in Hobart, has benefitted from a vital furniture and contents fitout worth \$500,000 – all donated from a hotel marked for demolition.

Amelie House is run by St Vincent de Paul Society Tasmania in a joint initiative with the Hobart City Mission. The donation resulted from discussions between the management of Ascott Limited Australia, the parent company of the Somerset on the Pier hotel, and SVdP Tasmania and assistance from Steve Devereaux from Housing All Australians.

Located in the heart of Hobart, Amelie House is a joint initiative between the Society and Hobart City Mission. The donation comes at a crucial time as Tasmania grapples with a housing crisis, with women and children particularly vulnerable.

'This donation of over \$500,000 worth of furniture has helped us create a safe, dignified, and comfortable space for 43 women at risk of homelessness in Hobart,' said Corey McGrath, SVdP Tasmania State President.

'Amelie House is making a significant impact on their journey toward stability and independence. The significance of this donation cannot be overstated.

'Without that furniture, we'd essentially be putting sleeping bags on the floor. This donation gives the women a sense of independence and dignity, providing more than just a place to sleep—it's about creating a home.'

Before relocating in late 2023, the facility was previously a men's transitional and crisis accommodation service.

Anthea Dimitrakopoulos, Ascott Limited Australia's General Manager of Brand and Environmental, Social, and Governance, explained how the idea emerged: 'We were closing down our property for refurbishment and had a surplus of high-quality furniture. Rather than letting it go to waste, we thought it made perfect sense to repurpose it for a good cause.'

The donation includes over 2,000 items, ranging from beds and TVs to crockery and white goods. It has enabled the facility to be outfitted at a fraction of the usual cost.

Amelie House has received further support from both private and corporate contributions, for instance the Neill family's Select Foundation, which funded the purchase of 18 self-contained accommodation pods, ensuring that these units remain permanent housing stock for the women.

Corey McGrath highlights the importance of these partnerships: 'Without private support, services like Amelie House wouldn't be possible. These contributions help us meet the growing demand for housing in Tasmania.'

The Tasmanian government has committed \$1.2 million to support the operational costs of Amelie House, a critical step in addressing the immediate housing needs of vulnerable women.

With plans to further develop the site in the future, Amelie House is part of a broader effort to combat homelessness in Tasmania. **R**

## Matthew Talbot Newcastle celebrates 50 years

**BY ROBERT CROSBY**

Senior Communications Coordinator,  
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

For the past 50 years, the Matthew Talbot Homelessness Service has been a beacon of hope for the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie communities.

Offering invaluable support for men and men with children experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the half-century milestone was brought up last December with case workers, local MPs and people supported by the service celebrating a legacy that has changed thousands of lives for the better.

Located close to the city CBD, a short walk from the Newcastle interchange in the suburb of Wickham, the Matthew Talbot Homelessness Service provides a range of assistance to people in need, including accommodation, case management and assertive outreach.

When the service first opened its doors in the 1970s, the dominant group in need of assistance came in the form of men sleeping rough. Fast forward five decades and the circumstances people are faced with are more varied and complex.

'We're having a lot of people who are navigating the service system for the first time,' says Glenn Beatty, Matthew Talbot Homelessness Service manager.

'We're having elderly people that we've never seen before – an 85-year-old man who was evicted on a no-grounds eviction who had nowhere else to go.'

More than 630 people were supported by the main Matthew Talbot Homelessness Service in the past financial



**Tim Crakanthorp, State MP for Newcastle, Vanessa Taylor, Matthew Talbot Homelessness Service, and Sharon Claydon, Federal MP for Newcastle, helped celebrate 50 years of service.**

year, along with an additional 200 people through the Newcastle Assertive Outreach program – working to identify and house rough sleepers – run in conjunction with Hunter New England Health and Homes NSW.

With close to 2,200 people waitlisted for social housing in Newcastle and the number of rough sleepers growing from six to 49 in the span of 12 months, one of the greatest challenges facing the service is the length of time required to secure a housing outcome for people seeking assistance. Over the past three years this duration has risen by 88 per cent from 82 days (FY 2021/22) to 154 days (FY 2023/24).

For those working on the frontline of the service each day, the most meaningful remedy that could be taken to support people amidst the current crisis is housing.

'We really need to see a significant investment in affordable housing in this country otherwise we're facing an even worse crisis as we go on,' says Glenn.

'One of the things that we're strong believers in is what we call a Housing First model. No matter what other challenges somebody's having in life, if you can get them into good, stable and secure housing, it's much easier to work alongside them to address other challenges.' **R**



*Kylan Beech, South Australia's Young Citizen of the Year 2024, is also an Australia Day Ambassador.*

## Kylan's an ambassador for Australia

Vincentian Kylan Beech, who hails from Barmera in the Riverland region of South Australia, 220 kilometres north-east of Adelaide, was named South Australia's Young Citizen of the Year in 2024 for his Cancer Council fundraising and volunteering commitments.

Kylan is also an Australia Day Ambassador with the role of encouraging locals to come together to reflect and celebrate. He spent this Australia Day at a Sandalwood ceremony to recognise the district's most outstanding residents.

'It is an awesome community, the recipients were very deserving of their awards,' Kylan said.

'It is such an honour to be an ambassador for the Australia Day Council and to encourage people to do good work for their community.

'It's not all about making individual people go out and fundraise... as an ambassador my role is to hopefully inspire people to support and champion

good things in their community (to inspire) people to be the best they can be''

After losing his mother to cancer at a young age, Kylan has dedicated much of his life to fundraising and helping others.

Raising more than \$100,000 for the Cancer Council through a bike ride from the Gold Coast to Adelaide with his three brothers, he is also a disability support worker and has been a Member of St Vincent de Paul Society for many years. He has worked as Youth Minister and is a mentor for local youth in Adelaide.

'The Australia Day Awards are amazing, and I feel very privileged to be part of them,' he said.

'I really love to be able to encourage others, and seeing the smiles on the faces of recipients and their community is great. I can't wait to go to more councils and meet different communities in the years to come.' **R**

## A very merry tropical Christmas

St Vincent de Paul Society Northern Territory's Ozanam House 2024 Christmas party was a day filled with joy, music, and festive spirit as Companions, staff, and supporters came together to celebrate the season.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and supporters, this year's event was truly special, creating an atmosphere of warmth and connection.

A key highlight of the day was the special sit-down meal with full table service, a welcome change from the usual self-service and meal lines. With delicious meals supported by Lay Group Asian United Food Services, guests were treated to a restaurant-style dining experience, helping them to feel valued and appreciated.

The generosity didn't stop there — Bunnings Darwin and Tony Vegas provided soft drinks, while Territory Events Hire provided extra seating on the lawn to relax and enjoy the festivities. Thoughtful Christmas gifts for Companions were made possible thanks to the support of BCF Darwin, Darwin Motor Group, and Kmart Casuarina, bringing extra holiday cheer to those who needed it most.

A special mention goes to the MUA Crew of the Rig Tender Pacific Rapier, whose \$500 donation played a key role in covering the event's costs and making it even more memorable.

The party atmosphere was elevated with live music, thanks to Kev from Crocodile Country, who organised a stellar lineup featuring Mandy Boots, JP Camp Dog, Steve Wilky, and Wayne Wright. The real magic happened when some Companions took the mic for an impromptu open mic session, borrowing guitars from the band and sharing their own songs. Their performances wowed the crowd, showcasing talent and the power of bringing people together through music.

The impact of the day was clear in the words of those who attended:

James, a regular Companion at Ozanam House, said, 'Christmas was great, really like hanging around singing and dancing, just an exciting day and gives you energy to move forward.'

Sione 'Johnny', a resident at Bakhita, reflected on his experience, 'Christmas party was great! I had just started living at Bakhita, and it was amazing to move in and get involved in a party straight away. Staff have been amazing, especially Tracey-Lee... She's the bomb! Been so great looking after me from the day I got there.'

Michael, another regular Companion, loved the new location, saying, 'Food was the best part, and was good all round! This new spot is fantastic. Love the staff, the crew



**SVdP NT CEO Rob Lutter and Housing Services Manager, Larissa Kirby**

here are awesome, always ready for a laugh and a joke, just make the place friendly and good to hang around.'

Athena from Services Australia, who operated Centrelink services at Ozanam House on Christmas Eve, praised the event and the new space, saying, 'I really enjoyed the local talent who ended up open mic singing on the day. The new location is much more open, inviting and modern.'

For Manik, Ozanam House Coordinator, the importance of the event was clear: 'It's really good to celebrate Christmas here. Our regulars really look forward to this special Christmas event with presents and music. It's something different that brings up spirits and you can really see them having fun.'

St Vincent de Paul Society Northern Territory extends its heartfelt thanks to all sponsors, supporters, and volunteers who made this year's Christmas celebration at Ozanam House so special. It was a day of shared joy, connection, and kindness — true reflection of the Christmas season. **R**

## Amidst hardships, the 'Middle world' embraces Society of St Vincent de Paul

**BY BRIAN STACEY**

President St Vincent de Paul Society  
Canberra/Goulburn Limited

In December 2024, I returned to Ecuador with my Peruvian wife, Lita, and visited a school for poor children run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, that we have been privately supporting.

This middle income nation has been in a national crisis for more than 12 months. The President's declaration of a State of Emergency in January 2024, when we first arrived in Quito, was because of soaring violence instigated by cocaine gangs. The insatiable demand for cocaine in western countries like Australia, which is an increasingly attractive destination for traffickers, is causing havoc for Ecuador, Peru and Colombia.

Encountering machine gun-bearing Ecuadorian soldiers on the streets of Quito's centre, which is a World Heritage area, was a shock. Just as disconcerting was returning to the city in December to find the streets in total darkness because of daily power rationing. Ecuador has been pummelled by an extraordinary drought, exacerbated by global warming, that has engulfed much of South America, drying rivers and reservoirs and putting the country's power grid on the brink of collapse. Since September, daily energy cuts have lasted as long as 14 hours!

If that isn't enough, Ecuador, like Peru, has a poverty rate of around 30 per cent (a decade earlier, it was double that), which means around 5.5 million of its population of around 18 million are still earning under USD \$90 per capita per month.

It is gratifying to know that the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) in Ecuador has been doing its best to respond to these challenging circumstances. They have thirteen conferences across Ecuador, although meetings have been suspended because of the State of Emergency, which includes a curfew.



***Ecuador takes its name from the imaginary line that divides the northern and southern hemispheres. The line passes through Quito, the capital, where Brian Stacey, the Society's President for Canberra/Goulburn, visited twice in 2024.***

SSVP Ecuador is much smaller and under-resourced compared to Australia. There is insufficient income to maintain a strong administration and they have no retail arm, with their only source of income being donations from local parishes and businesses, with some overseas support, mostly from the USA. The Government doesn't provide any support.

Nonetheless, in close collaboration with the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian priests, both very active in Ecuador, the Conferences provide support to the most vulnerable in Ecuador including delivering groceries for low income families and elderly people and volunteering at orphanages.

A highlight of our visit was to be taken to see the Middle of the World complex where the equator runs through Quito. Symbolically, I felt this shows how the Society encompasses both halves of the world, assisting people in need wherever they live. It was a thrill to be photographed with a foot in each hemisphere. **R**

## Will cash no longer be king?

### BY DAMIAN LEGG

President St Vincent de Paul Society (NT) Inc.

I saw on the news that the government will [legislate such that some businesses will not have to accept cash](#) in the future.

They may not be 'essential' services but, like many things, I worry that it is just the start of a move to dispense with cash. I think the article says that small businesses may be exempt and would not have to accept cash. That might have an impact on some of our Companions in the Territory. But I am not aware of any research in the NT on what the impact could be.

I believe cashless transactions are in the interest of financial institutions but not in the interest of all consumers. I also understand that not having cash might reduce costs for businesses and also risks around robbery.

I don't know if there is any research in Australia to support my concerns that a cashless world is a risk to people who might be vulnerable or not financially literate. What I think about is that having cash physically and visibly move through your hands enables a person to better understand the implications of purchases. Spending is 'invisible' in a cashless Society and so perhaps the chances of spending more are higher, and budgeting can be more difficult.

Low-income individuals and people with limited financial literacy may not have access to banking services or digital payment methods. This can lead to their exclusion from services and transactions that require cashless payments.

Those who rely on cash may face higher costs when forced to use digital payment methods. For example, they might incur fees for maintaining bank accounts or face penalties for withdrawing more than their balance.

People with low financial literacy may be more susceptible to online scams as well as high-interest loans, which can exacerbate their financial difficulties.

Could cashless transactions lead to increased monitoring and data collection, which might be a privacy concern? Additionally, the risk of cyberattacks and fraud can be higher for those who are not across digital security.



*Gone and largely forgotten... is Australia's current coinage also destined to become history?*

The constant monitoring and management of digital transactions can contribute to stress and anxiety, particularly for those who are not comfortable with technology. Or there may be no monitoring at all by an account holder as banks encourage customers to move to online statements and online service provision that require access to computers. So maybe all that makes keeping track too hard for some people.

I don't know if financial institutions are lobbying government for the removal of cash, but if there is research to suggest it would be an issue, should we advocate for our Companions who might be disadvantaged, or keep a watch on what is happening? **R**



# Goodbye cheques, but what about cash?

Cheques will become a thing of the past from 30 September 2029, but cash will still be 'legal tender' for making purchases, despite Australians' increasing preference for digital payments by card, smartphone or online.

According to a statement from the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, 'For many Australians, cash is more than a payment method, it's a lifeline... there is an ongoing place for cash in our society under the Albanese Government'.

However, not all businesses will be required to accept cash after 1 January 2026, and which ones will be mandated to do so is now the subject of a government consultation with submissions sought from interested parties, one of which was St Vincent de Paul Society Australia.

'We would want to ensure that no one is left behind, especially the elderly and those with limited access to technology (for whatever reason', the Society's submission began.

'In the absence of legislative change, there is no guarantee that Australians will be able to continue to buy essential goods and services with cash in the future. (We would support legislation to ensure cash continues to be accepted as a means of payment)'

The issues were examined in depth in a Treasury consultation paper, [Mandating cash acceptance](#), that canvassed the potential problems of over-reliance on digital payments, or, as it described the issue, the 'Impacts of reduced levels of cash acceptance'.

Explaining the government's approach, the paper said, 'The objective of the cash acceptance mandate is to ensure that cash remains a viable and accessible in-person payment option for essential items, allowing consumers, including those unable to use digital payment methods, to participate in the economy.'

Although a relatively small proportion of Australians have a heavy reliance on cash - around 1.5 million people use cash to make more than 80 per cent of their in-person payments - cash provides 'an easily accessible backup to digital payments in times of natural disaster or digital outage'.

But there's no denying cash is on the way out. Its share of payments dropped to 13 per cent in 2022, the last year for which RBA data is available. In 2007, cash accounted for 70 per cent of transactions. The figure is projected to fall to just four per cent by 2030.

The paper said a mandate on accepting cash meant those who rely on it will not be left behind, which the Society regards as 'a fundamental principle'.

***'There appears to be a push by government and certainly banks towards a cashless society and if legislated in some form will indeed have an impact on our Companions and many others in our Society, including the elderly (and some younger people), those living in regional and remote communities and those living with disability to name but a few.'***

– Mark Gaetani, National President



PHOTO BY MELISSA WALKER HORN ON UNSPLASH

We agree with the importance of social inclusion, in particular, that digital inclusion requires the affordability of an internet connection, access to an appropriate device and good internet connectivity, and the ability to use a range of devices to engage with online systems.

Certain cohorts of people have struggled with the digital shift, particularly the elderly and that while the digital gap between capital cities and regions continues to narrow, the gap in access and digital ability remains significant.

The paper notes the 670 First Nations communities without digital access and the 24 per cent of people living with a disability (1.1 million) who are highly digitally excluded. We agree 'the mandate must assist with payment system resilience, for example, during natural disasters or digital outages'.

These issues and more are now under consideration, with an announcement due later in the year on which businesses will still be required to accept cash. It might be noted that many prefer not to.

'Mandating cash for essential purchases, such as groceries and fuel, means those who rely on cash will not be left behind,' the Government promises. The Society hopes this will be the guiding light of the new legislation. **R**

## Online retail platform for Victoria

In a nod to the changing shopping habits of consumers, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria has launched an online retail platform. 'Vinnies online'. Billed as the 'shop that never sleeps', it draws on a warehouse in Melbourne's industrial south-east that is filled with goods sorted by volunteers before being photographed and uploaded to the website for sale.

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria has previously sold select products via online retail platforms such as eBay but will now consolidate all its online selling from one website.

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria head of merchandise and retail innovation, Liz Randle, said, 'E-commerce now comprises 22 per cent of retail sales, so it was critical to meet customers where they are at. Our customers have been asking for this for a while,' Vinnies' Liz said, "so we thought, right, let's go, let's get serious about this.'

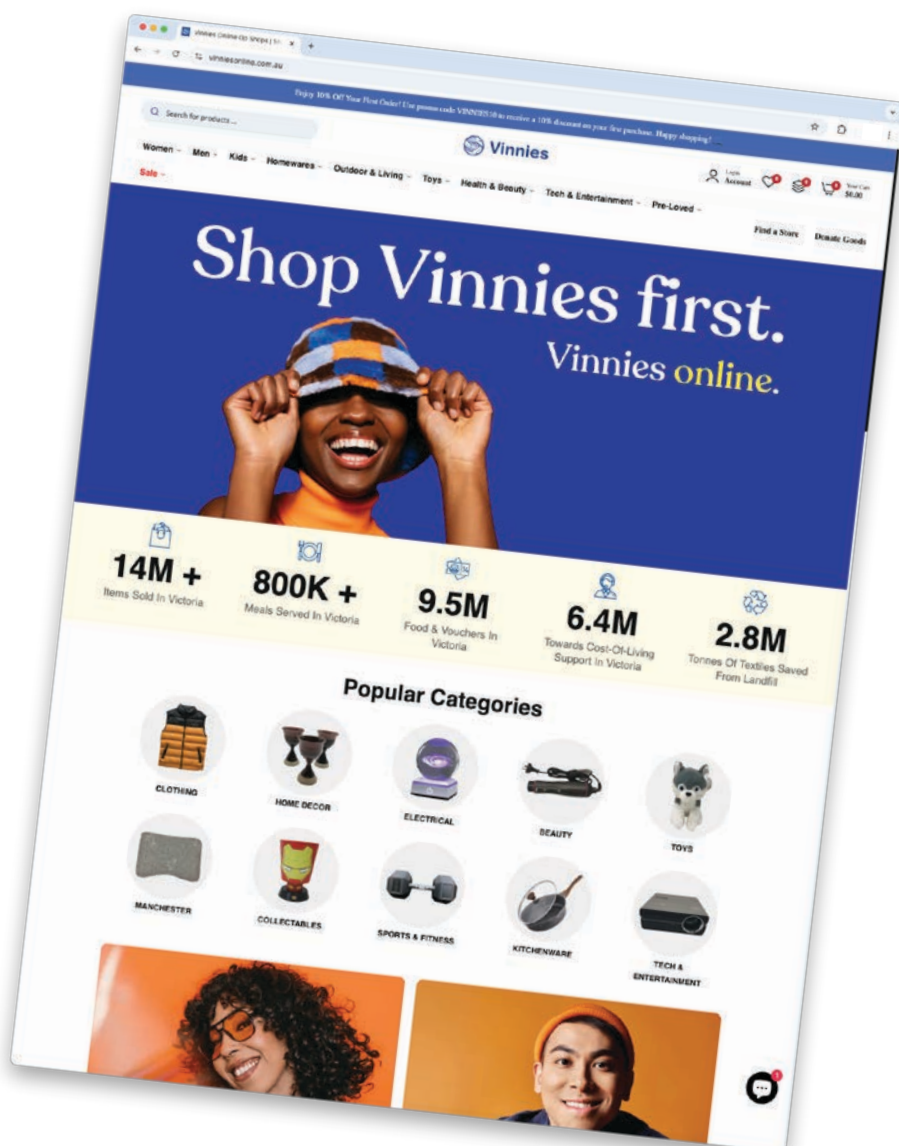
From clothing to electricals, the online store sells quite an array of items, the benefit being to find a market for items not able to be stocked in-store.

Ms Randle said, 'The other day, and I'm not even joking, someone donated a caravan. We sold that in 48 hours.'

Also snapped up have been a hospital bed worth \$7000 and an Olympic-level training bike for paraplegics, both bought up through the website at bargain prices. **R**



Vinnies Victoria head of merchandise and retail innovation, Liz Randle with items to be sold online. Photo: copyright: Kylie Iva Photography.





*St Vincent de Paul Society Northern Region Case Coordinator Catherine Nolan with Emergency Relief volunteers, Eric Welsh (left) and Vyvyan Allchin, who helped prepare back-to-school packs.*

## Back-to-school appeal gets Tasmanians' support

The Vinnies School Essentials Appeal was launched in early January in advance of the 2025 school year, a time when Tasmanian families were facing heightened financial pressures. It was also when the demand for emergency relief was starting to peak.

The second annual appeal focused on providing back-to-school essentials such as shoes, uniforms, stationery and textbooks, costly items that add to the financial pressures being faced at this time of year by so many families.

Last year, the Society in Tasmania helped more than 3,200 people during the back-to-school period alone.

Statistics show one-in-six Tasmanian children living below the poverty line, with around 120,000 people estimated to live in poverty.

St Vincent de Paul Society Tasmania CEO Heather Kent said, 'We know that there will be families that

have financially struggled through Christmas only to be hit with the costs of getting their children back to school, which for many will see them need emergency assistance.'

Ms Kent added, 'The Vinnies School Essentials Appeal helps ensure every student, no matter their financial situation, has the tools to start the school year feeling supported and included. If children's needs for essential school items are not met, they are likely to feel isolation and anxiety at a time when self-confidence is key.'

The School Essentials Appeal was again well supported by a wide cross section of Tasmanians, both financially and in-kind, with donations of school related items being dropped off at Vinnies shops, hubs and offices around the State. **R**

## Church leaders discuss support for refugees

**Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD STL, Bishop of Parramatta, delivered this homily, *Living the Beatitudes and witnessing to the globalisation of hope*, on 16 February 2025. It is edited for length. Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Cor 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26**

Dear sisters and brothers,

This week, Pope Francis made an extraordinary intervention which divided opinions, not only among non-Catholics but also among Catholics, especially in America. He wrote a letter to the US bishops decrying the mass deportation of illegal immigrants. While the letter acknowledges the right of every country to enact necessary policies to defend itself and promote public safety, the Pope said that all laws must be enacted in the light of the dignity of the person and his or her fundamental rights.

Drawing a parallel between Jesus' own experience as a refugee, he called for respect and solidarity against the sweeping characterisation of migrants as criminals. He wrote that the Holy Family themselves sought refuge in another country because they were not safe in their own. Christians, therefore, must do well to see the face of Christ in those who left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution and oppression.

The Holy Father is passionate about the defence of the dignity of the vulnerable.

When African immigrants died in their thousands in the Mediterranean Sea, he went to Lampedusa, where many were shipwrecked and drowned. There, he appealed for the globalisation of hope as opposed to the globalisation of indifference. As always, it is the justice and compassion of God for the poor that is at the heart of the Church's prophetic witness and action. Commitment to the vulnerable and the marginalised is central to being a Christian. For the core belief of Christianity is God's self-emptying journey to the cross for the sake of broken humanity.



*Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen was a panellist at St Vincent de Paul Society's Congress 2023+ in Sydney.*

***'The Holy Family themselves sought refuge in another country because they were not safe in their own...'***

*– Pope Francis*

The Word of God this Sunday challenges us to see our brothers and sisters through the prism of their suffering. It commits us to work for what Pope Francis describes as the globalisation of hope. Jeremiah in the first reading puts a simple but radical choice before his people: either they trust in God's promises and follow his ways or they act according to their self-interest. It was not an easy choice for them, especially when everyone else was trying to save their own skin.

With the imminent threat of invasion by the Assyrians and the ensuing chaos, the Israelites were busy running after the strong, the wealthy and the powerful. Jeremiah speaks the small

voice of fidelity, integrity and justice in the midst of fear, self-interest and opportunism. He urges the people to stake everything on God's covenant, rather than on human security through power and might.

In the Gospel, Jesus also speaks to the crowd who have followed him and witnessed his ministry of healing, mercy and compassion for the social outcasts.

He puts to them an alternative vision of life, which is opposite to what the dominant system has to offer. In God's eyes, the blessed are not the powerful, the rich and those who have everything at their disposal. Instead, they are the servants of God's life, love and justice. They are those who suffer for the cause of the Kingdom. They exchange the security of wealth, privilege and status for the insecurity of trust in God; that is, faith without sight, strength without violence and love without counting the cost.

The Beatitudes identify those who God has a special concern for. They are the hungry, the sorrowful and persecuted.

Jesus echoes a world turned upside down that Mary sings in the Magnificat: the lowly raised and the mighty cast down, the hungry filled and the rich empty-handed. These are the people God notices and blesses. Jesus invites us to find this kind of happiness through a life of witness, service and solidarity. Christian happiness belongs to those who dare to give, to serve, to love even to the extent of having to pay the cost of that love in the way that Jesus himself did on the cross. That is fundamentally the meaning of the Beatitudes. **R**

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Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen's homily appeared previously in Catholic Outlook, news from the Diocese of Parramatta, Sydney.



***'It is no coincidence that I as a lawyer was asked to focus mainly on the rights of those on the margins of our society, especially the First Nations peoples and refugees and asylum seekers. And what a privilege it has been...'***

***'The complexity of the problems we face and the richness of the opportunities offered demand that we build bridges between rich and poor, establishing advocacy links of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests...'***

***'As I've said so often to church social justice groups: make sure you're eyeballing both the decision makers and the marginalised persons affected by their decisions.'***

*– Fr Frank Brennan's Homily for the 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2025 (22 February 2025)*

## Get to know St Vincent de Paul Society Australia's Overseas Partnerships Program

The St Vincent de Paul Society Australia (SVdP) is deeply committed to supporting communities in need, both locally and globally. We fulfil this commitment by helping those in need in the Asia-Pacific region through the Overseas Partnerships Program (OPP).

The OPP is coordinated on behalf of the Society by National Council of Australia and overseen and facilitated by the Overseas Partnerships Program Standing Committee and Secretariate, working with State and Territory Councils and Conferences.

The OPP is comprised of **Twining, Projects, Assist A Student and Emergency Relief**, and is delivered through St Vincent de Paul Society partnerships in the following regions and countries:

- **Oceania:** Kiribati, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk).
- **Asia:** Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Laos PDR and Myanmar.

Being involved in the OPP offers an opportunity to collaborate with like-minded individuals to bring about lasting change on an international scale by helping to implement programs that improve living conditions for marginalised communities. There are numerous ways Members of the SVdP community support this important work, from becoming a Twining Officer, Committee membership, or joining specialised Working Groups focused on developing long-term, sustainable relationships in these regions.

### 1. How Members Contribute

Conferences are the lifeblood of the Overseas Partnerships Program, and there are numerous ways Members contribute to the OPP, no matter your background or expertise. Initially, you could express interest in being a Twining Officer for Conference or Council to raise awareness and support for the OPP. With experience, you may want to be considered as a member of one of the OPP Committees.

Involvement in National or State/Territory Committees is facilitated by regular Zoom meetings and occasional face-to-face meetings.

### 2. Overseas Partnerships Program Standing Committee

Reporting to National Council, the Overseas Partnerships Program Standing Committee (OPP SC) guides the direction of international initiatives and ensures that

partnerships align with local needs and have a lasting impact in overseas communities. OPP SC Members collaborate with Council General International (CGI) and its regional representatives, our overseas partners and States and Territories to provide advice to National Council in strategic planning and the implementation of the OPP.

Chair and Members of the OPP SC are appointed by the National President and come from across the Society.

### 3. State and Territory Overseas Partnerships Committees

Most State and Territory Councils in Australia have an Overseas Partnerships Committee (OPC). These OPCs are crucial to the Society's work because they: encourage communication and relationship building between twinned Conferences and Councils, support the engagement of Conferences and Councils in their jurisdiction in the OPP; and coordinate the collection of remittances for Twining, Grants, Projects and Assist A Student.

Chair and Members of the OPP SC are appointed by the State or Territory President and come from across the Society. Current Members come from New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

### 4. The OPP National Network

The OPP National Network connects SVdP staff and Members from all States and Territory Councils, providing a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing resources, and collaborating on national initiatives. It enables States and Territories to stay connected, keep updated on the latest developments in the Society's overseas projects, contribute to cross-state coordination, and be a part of efforts aimed at raising awareness and engagement in the OPP across jurisdictions. The OPP National Network is essential to the continued strengthening of the OPP.

The Co-Chairs and Members of the OPP National Network are the Members and staff from the States/Territories involved in the OPP.

### 5. Society of St Vincent de Paul Oceania Partnership

The National Council of Australia is working with the CGI's Oceania team, the National Council of New Zealand and the National Councils of Federated States of Micronesia – Chuuk, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga to collaborate to further the mission of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Oceania through the establishment of the Oceania Partnership.

The aim of this partnership is for the National Councils in



**1. Chairs of State Territory Overseas Partnerships Committees and Administrative Support, National Council Overseas Partnerships Program Standing Committee and Secretariate support at inaugural OPP National Network meeting in Sydney March 2024;**

**2. Chair and Members of Overseas Partnerships Standing Committee and Secretariate support team at annual face to face meeting in Canberra February 2025;**

**3. National Presidents and Treasurers from Oceania (Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga), International Territorial Vice President Oceania and Zone Coordinators and Secretariate support team at inaugural Oceania Partners Forum meeting in Canberra November 2024;**

**4. Members of PNG and Timor-Leste Working Group, International Territorial Vice President Oceania and team, Trainers and Secretariate Support at Overseas Partnerships Training in Canberra July 2024;**

**5. President and Members of Fiji National Council, National Council and NSW State Council Representatives during visit to Fiji in February 2024.**

Oceania to journey together as they become sustainable and self-sustaining, through increasing their capabilities across multiple areas.

The SSVP Oceania Partnership is governed by the Oceania Partners Forum which is made up of the National Presidents of each of the National Councils in Oceania.

CGI and the National Councils of Australia and New Zealand will provide leadership, support and assistance to the SSVP Oceania Program over the next 10 years. Australia is providing Secretariate support.

## 6. Working Groups

The Society in Australia is also continuing to work to strengthen its engagements with its partner National Societies. This includes the potential for Australia's State/Territory Councils to twin with Overseas National Councils in Asia or the Pacific, with the first two twinings already in formation.

The Queensland State Council has established a twinning relationship with the Solomon Islands, while the New South Wales State Council has twinned with Fiji. These twinning relationships provide an exciting opportunity for individuals to engage in building sustainable development projects,

strengthening cultural understanding, and fostering long-term support between Australian Members and the people of these Pacific nations.

Co-chairs and Members of these working groups are appointed by the National President of the Overseas Partner and the President of the State or Territory Council.

Emerging Societies are also supported by Vincentians in Australia through the Papua New Guinea Working Group and the Timor-Leste Working Group. Being part of these working groups gives individuals a chance to play a direct role in implementing life-changing projects and building strong partnerships that benefit local communities.

Members of these working groups are appointed by the National President upon the recommendation of the Chair of the OPP SC. Current Members come from Canberra-Goulburn, Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania. **R**

If you're interested in learning more about how you can get involved, visit the St Vincent de Paul Society website or contact your Conference President, Chair of your State or Territory OPC or email [overseassupport@svdp.org.au](mailto:overseassupport@svdp.org.au).

Join us in making a difference for people in need across the globe, and together we can help build a global network of charity as envisaged by our Founder Frédéric Ozanam.



## St Vincent de Paul Society

NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc.

*good works*

Responsibility for this document rests with the  
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### **PRIVACY STATEMENT**

The St Vincent de Paul Society of Australia respects the privacy of the people it assists, our Members, Volunteers and employees. As a result, the names of clients, members, volunteers or employees featured in this report may have been changed and pictorial models used.

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