

WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

April 2025



BRIAN RITCHIE'S FAREWELL, VINCENTIA

Good afternoon Members, Volunteers and staff,

Thank you all for your dedication and great work as we journey through this Jubilee Year "Pilgrimage of Hope".

"Peace is the first thing the angels sang.
Peace is the mark of the children of God.
Peace is the nurse of love.
Peace is the mother of unity.
Peace is the rest of the blessed souls.
Peace is the dwelling place of eternity"

St Vincent de Paul told the Daughters of Charity: "Poor people are our masters; they're our Kings; they must be obeyed, and it's no exaggeration to call them our kings because Our Lord is present in persons who are poor."

As we approach the Sacred Triduum of Lent, may we all review our lives and prepare to enjoy the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

God Bless

Peter Doris

Central Council President



Wollongong Cental Council Support Office Opening

We were thrilled to welcome leaders and members of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW to the newly refurbished Warrawong site, joined by Alison Byrnes MP (Member for Cunningham), Cr Tania Brown (Lord Mayor of Wollongong), and Chris Homer MAICD (Mayor of Shellharbour).

Local Aboriginal Elder Aunty Sharralyn Robinson offered a heartfelt Welcome to Country and unveiled the new Acknowledgement of Country plaque. Father Damien Ellis also joined us to reflect on the St Vincent de Paul's profound empathy and commitment to action, and to bless the revitalised workspace.

Our refurbished offices will allow our 400-strong members throughout the region to continue supporting people in need.



In this quarterly newsletter you can expect:

- Conference updates
- Pastoral care
- Useful resources
- Member spotlight
- Upcoming events

Vinnies staff contacts

Regional Director - South
solange.frost@vinnies.org.au

Manager - South
ana.suarez@vinnies.org.au

Youth & Schools
kelly.mccrohon@vinnies.org.au

Operation Support
alisha.way@vinnies.org.au

Community Outreach
nat.nicastro@vinnies.org.au

Client & Member Support
courine.tan@vinnies.org.au
cams.support@vinnies.org.au

Nagle Centre
naglecentre@vinnies.org.au
rebecca.cisneros@vinnies.org.au

Vinnies Vans
campbelltownvv@vinnies.org.au
illawarravv@vinnies.org.au

IT
servicedesk@vinnies.org.au

Finance
bharat.narsey@vinnies.org.au

MAVS Hub Support
mavs.support@vinnies.org.au

Would you like an event added to this newsletter? Please send details to svdpwollongong@vinnies.org.au

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May the Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice hope, faith and reconciliation.



Nagle Centre Renovation

The Nagle Centre has long been a place of care, support, and hope for individuals and families across the Macarthur region who are experiencing crisis or disadvantage. Now, with a renewed vision and a major investment, we're taking the next step in its journey.

The Society NSW is investing \$900,000 into transforming the Nagle Centre into a dynamic, multi-functional, place-based hub. This revitalised space will better meet the evolving needs of the Campbelltown community.

As part of this transformation, the Campbelltown Conference and the South West Sydney Vinnies Van—both currently operating from the Nagle Centre—will be relocating to the newly refurbished Mary Gregory Cottage, right next door at 24 Iolanthe Street.

To prepare for this exciting redevelopment, the Nagle Centre will close to the public from 14 May with construction expected to be completed by the end of October.

On 9 April, we were honoured to welcome five Presentation Sisters for morning tea and a heartfelt conversation about the Centre's upcoming changes. The visit was especially meaningful given their deep, decades-long connection to the Centre. In particular, Sr Frances Horton played a pivotal role in its development and growth. The Sisters expressed their full support for the changes and are looking forward to the next chapter of the Nagle Centre's story.



Pictured left to right: Sr Helen O'Connell, Sr Sue Miller, Sr Margaret Barclay, Sr Cecilia Wiltshire, Sr Frances Horton, Bec Cisneros, Sr Mary Walsh, Courine Tan, and Joy Kyriacou.

Brain teaser

Mavis is an enthusiastic Conference member who volunteers extensively, including with Meals on Wheels and fundraising for the Guide Dog Association, all while also caring her grandchildren. However, Mavis' home visits average only 3-4 minutes.

What issues does this raise? What would be appropriate time frame a visit?

While we understand time is precious, a meaningful home visit should typically last between 20–30 minutes. This allows time to:

- Build rapport
- Conduct thorough assessment of need
- Offer emotional and practical support

Taking the time to listen, observe, and connect can make a significant difference in someone's life — and is at the heart of what we do.

The Vincentian Visitation Guidelines are being updated and will be shared with Conferences soon.



Staff Development

MVEI staff joined their counterparts from across the state for a training day at the University of Sydney on 21 March. It was a great opportunity to network with other regions and align our strategic plan and goals for 2025.



Member spotlight

On 25 February, newly appointed President Anne Sheldrick hosted an engaging information session for more than 20 individuals interested in joining the newly reformed Eagle Vale Conference. The first official meeting is expected to take place this April at Mary Immaculate Catholic Church.

With the addition of our Youth Conference, the Wollongong Central Council now proudly includes 33 Conferences and over 400 active Members.

A big congratulations to Anne and all involved in this exciting new chapter—well done!

Upcoming events

18 Apr	Good Friday
19 Apr	Easter Sunday
25 Apr	ANZAC Day
1 May	WCC Social Justice Network meeting
3 May	Federal Election
6 May	Highlands/Wollondilly Spirituality Day, Tahmoor
13 May	Shoalhaven Spirituality Day, Vincentia
20 May	Volunteers Week Celebration, Bowral
21 May	Volunteering Expo, Wollongong
21 May	Nagle Centre renovations commence
23 May	SWS Vinnies Van 1 st Anniversary celebration
27 May - 3 Jun	Reconciliation Week
29 May	Campbelltown Spirituality Day, Ruse
18 Jun	WCC Meeting
19 Jun	CEO Sleepout, Wollongong
29 Jul	Member Support Day, Camden/Wollondilly
13 Aug	Member Support Day, Wollongong
29 Aug	Community Sleepout, Bowral

Useful resources



Mobile payments

The Community Fundraising and Events team is now using Commonwealth Bank Smart Mini terminals to support Christmas and Winter Appeals across Conferences and Regional Councils in NSW.

These user-friendly devices accept all major credit and debit cards, with funds going directly to each Conference's account — making donations seamless and secure.

Once allocated, the terminal will remain permanently with your Conference. If you'd like to express interest in receiving a Smart Mini terminal in future rollouts, please email: events@vinnies.org.au

WWCC Renewals

You can now conveniently renew your Working With Children Check (WWCC) online via Service NSW.

To complete the renewal, you'll need:

- A MyServiceNSW account linked to your WWCC
- Three current forms of ID
- A device with a working front-facing camera
- A current WWCC, this option is not available once your check expires.

If you need help with your WWCC renewal or our police check, please contact our Operations Support Officer, Alisha, on 0491 071 890.



Training & development

The past three months have been a busy and rewarding time for training across our region. We sincerely thank you for your ongoing dedication to attending compliance learning and support sessions. Your participation plays a crucial role in the Society's ability to grow and to offer a meaningful "hand up" to those we serve.

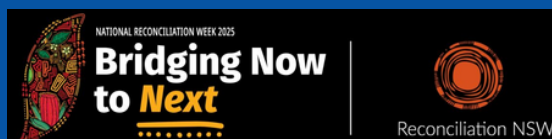
A special thank you to the Nowra Conference for hosting our pilot Suicide Prevention and Awareness Training session on 25 March. The session included important self-care strategies and was a valuable step toward supporting both our members and the broader community.

If your Conference would like to organise in-person training, please contact Nat at 0429 565 886.

Djurali – Aboriginal Cultural Awareness

The St Vincent de Paul Society is proud to launch our new cultural awareness initiative — the Djurali Program, a name that means "to learn and grow."

With Reconciliation Week beginning on 27 May, there's no better time to deepen your understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and strengthen our shared commitment to respect and inclusion.



The Djurali Program is available now on MAVS. If you experience any issues accessing the platform, please reach out to alisha.way@vinnies.org.au for support.

A few reminders:

- Vinnies offers safe, completely interest-free and charge-free loans of up to \$2000 to individuals and families across NSW. The NILs Team can be contacted on 1800 484 664 or nils@vinnies.org.au
- Keep up to date with the latest news, events, and updates from the Wollongong Central Council region by following our official Vinnies Wollongong Facebook page.

VINNIES WOLLONGONG



- ClubGRANTS is one of Australia's largest grant programs, providing more than \$100 million in cash each year to a variety of worthy causes across NSW. Applications for funding are now open, with many closing at the end of May. If your Conference is thinking of applying, please contact the MVEI team for advice and so we can track/coordinate applications across the diocese.



- New to the Society? Online Orientation sessions are held regularly with info on our founding story, structure and services, roles and our Mission, Vision and Values. Dates can be found on MAVS or contact the Learning Team learning@vinnies.org.au





Mission, Spirituality & Pastoral Care

We have a Federal election ahead of us!

As Vincentians, our mission is “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.”

Our aspiration is: An Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice.

And one of our key values is Advocacy - working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice. Election campaign time is the ideal opportunity for us to make our voices heard to Australia’s decision-makers.

In the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) Statement for Social Justice Sunday in 2003 (“A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today”) it’s admitted that, “unfortunately, Catholics have often shared with other Australians a blindness and lack of sympathy towards those who are different. But this does not reflect the Gospel.”

Pope John Paul II said, in a homily in 2000: We still encounter in the world a closed-minded attitude and even one of rejection, due to unjustified fears and concern for one’s own interests alone. These forms of discrimination are incompatible with belonging to Christ and to the Church.

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. (Titus 3:1-2)

“The Gospel urges us to welcome strangers because we are all precious in God’s sight. Our worth does not depend on the colour of our skin, our customs, our religion [or our economic potential]. We are made in God’s image, each deeply loved by God, and that is the source of our human dignity”. Everyone matters, every day.

This is reflected too, in the Society’s values of Compassion (welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement) and Respect (Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions).

When we welcome the stranger (or those who are different), we welcome Christ. We know this from the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus tells us very clearly that what we do to help another, who is hungry, sick, naked, or in prison we do to Him. And conversely, when we fail to help, we are neglecting Him.

The ACBC statement asks the question: “How do we change those aspects of Australian life that are built on exclusion?”

“The first steps are to be critical of arguments put for excluding people, and to encourage public conversation. When we listen to the opinions of politicians, columnists and radio talk-show hosts, we must ask whether their ideas and the ways they express them encourage us to be more or less welcoming.

We should be concerned above all that Australian policy be morally based: that it respect the human dignity of all and recognise the claim that the needy have on the privileged” - which of course refers to another of our Catholic Social Teaching principles – the preferential option for the poor.

“We must help define what is acceptable political behaviour. When we believe that politicians are attacking vulnerable groups for electoral gain, we must show our concern at such unacceptable behaviour”.

As Vincentians, let us take up our responsibility of advocacy, while also setting an example of openness and generosity towards others and lead the way in compassionate and respectful dialogue.

Leonie Duck | Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care Partner - South

“Vincentian Hope”

We hope you can join us in your region for our spirituality / retreat day to explore what the Jubilee Year of Hope means for us as Vincentians. It is a great opportunity to spend time with fellow members, sharing the deeper side of our service to those we assist. Dates appear in the newsletter calendar and details have been shared via email.



We hope you enjoyed this information, however if you would prefer not to receive the newsletter please email svdpwollongong@vinnies.org.au to unsubscribe.