



GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY MEMBER NEWSLETTER



2025 Greater Sydney Community Sleepout



Message from
Louis Hearnden
Metro Regional Director

As we approach the close of 2025, I want to acknowledge what a significant and rewarding year it has been across Greater Western Sydney. Since stepping into the Regional Director role at the beginning of the year, I've had the privilege of working alongside you through a year shaped by dedication and continued service in the face of growing need.

This edition highlights the breadth of our Vincentian community from the success of the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout to conferences marking inspiring milestones, to schools deepening their commitment to faith in action.

Looking ahead, 2026 will see significant investment across our region to strengthen local impact. This year we began capital works upgrades across our Vinnies Support Centre (VSC) network. This will continue in 2026 to ensure that these spaces continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve well into the future. In addition, we're improving our Vinnies Vans service with improved reporting capabilities and new runs bringing food, dignity, and support to even more people doing it tough.

Membership growth remains a priority for the year ahead, with a focus on sustaining and supporting Conferences to continue their vital work. A warm welcome to all new members who've joined us this year. You are a valued part of our mission. Thank you to all who've invested time in welcoming and engaging new or existing Members in the Vincentian mission this year. Your efforts help ensure that our members remain the Society's greatest strength, now and into the future.

With the 2025 Christmas Appeal now underway, your role in meeting the cost-of-living crisis is more vital than ever. Every home visit, conversation, hamper, and referral is a powerful act of hope.

Thank you for all you've done this year to live out the mission with compassion and conviction. Let's finish 2025 together with purpose and carry that energy forward into a year of renewed service in 2026.

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(1800 478 776)



A message from

Leo Tucker

Executive Director of Mission and Spirituality



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Commemorating Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Dear All,

Today the St Vincent de Paul Society commemorates the passing and feast day of our co-founder, Antoine Frederic Ozanam, 172 years ago in Marseille. There is much to reflect upon within the life and legacy of Frederic Ozanam. Frederic's vision was for the revival of a Church of integrity, a Church inspired by Gospels rather than by corruption and politics. He called for a Church to hear the cry of the poor.



Born in Milan 23 April 1813 and baptised Antione Frederic Ozanam, he was one of 14 children but only one of 4 surviving to adulthood. Frederic moved to Lyon in 1815 where he live much of his childhood and schooling years, before moving to Paris to join the University of Paris in 1831.

He was a literary scholar, lawyer, journalist, author, university lecturer, and social justice advocate. Frederic and friends revived a university debating group known as the Conference of History, which discussed the impact of the Church through history. In many ways, it was a debating group on the virtues of the catholic faith. Through these reflections and discussions on faith he and his companions were moved and challenged to expressing this raw faith into actions of charity and of love. In this on the 23rd April 1833, Frederic's 20th birthday, the group then became the Conference of Charity, later known as the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Frederic Ozanam later married Amelie Soulacroix 1841, the daughter of the rector of the University of Lyon, which was followed by the birth of his daughter Marie in 1845.

Sadly, his naturally weak constitution fell prey to consumption, which he hoped to cure by visiting Italy, but on his return to France he died in Marseille on Thursday, September 8, 1853, at only the age of 40. He was buried in the crypt of the church of St. Joseph des Carmes at the Institut Catholique in Paris.

Frederic's legacy...

- Frederic was a man of faith. He understood the importance of his work within the guidance and nurturing of prayer and spiritual advice. One such advisor was Sr Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity working in the slums of Paris who nurtured Frederic's spiritual centre or spiritual love, as she expressed, a love that was practical and relational. She reminded Frederic often that charity was to "be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor."
- Frederic was a man of love. His love for God and Church was strengthened because of his relationships with those experiencing deep poverty, his confreres and his family.
- Frederic was a man of hope. He saw the importance of a legacy of justice and advocacy for the disadvantaged in society. He related by being a voice for them. Frederic was a champion for social justice especially towards the end of his life. His desire to raise controversial issues in the magazine 'The New Era' was not at all welcomed by many conservatives within the Church. However it was because of his relationships with the people he loved, the blindness of Government and Church and the continued oppression of the weak and vulnerable which moved him deeply to speak out. This response for justice and love permeates in all aspects of the writings of Frederic as he wrote; "Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books or in discussions with politicians, but by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes."

Understanding the charisms of Frederic Ozanam is crucial in deepening our personal spirit. It will give us a profounder insight into the words of our mission and vision, as well as a deeper appreciation for our Society logo of the hands receiving, assisting and blessing.

May Frederic Ozanam continue to guide our Society in hearing and understanding the cry of poverty and faithfully serve in compassionate love.

St Vincent de Paul – Feast Day 27 September

The spirit of St Vincent de Paul is alive and well in 2025.

Growing up in a Catholic family in the 1960s, the St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies) was very much part of our world. My father was a Vinnies volunteer and my mother spent many years working at the Rendu Centre. We later moved to a Vincentian parish where we encountered the distinctive charism through the work of the priests, brothers and various ministries of the Daughters of Charity.

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation founded in Paris by Frédéric Ozanam in 1833. Profoundly moved by the abject poverty of families living on the streets after the French Revolution, he gathered a small group of people to begin the work of ministering to the poor, modelling their mission on the patron saint of Christian charity, St Vincent de Paul (1581-1660).

“Deal with the most urgent needs. Organise charity so that it is more efficient... teach reading and writing, educate with the aim of giving each the means of self-support. Intervene with authorities to obtain reforms in structure... there is no charity without justice.” (St Vincent de Paul).

Vinnies has grown today into a global organisation with over 800,000 Members and 1,500,000 volunteers, assisting 30 million people each day. The Society works towards creating a more just and compassionate world by providing food, clothing, housing and access to support networks for people in the community who are marginalised or disadvantaged. Vinnies offers a “hand up” rather than a “hand out” and advocacy on behalf of those in need goes to the heart of what the St Vincent de Paul Society stands for.

While historical perspectives and contemporary data help to provide context for the work of the Society, the interactions between Members and volunteers with clients is where the Gospel message and the spirit of St Vincent de Paul himself are enlivened. Vinnies is about engaging with the personal stories of others, wherever and in whatever circumstances prevail. The slow and gentle work of God in the world today is never clearer than in the relational aspect of walking with another and getting to know their story. Jake’s is one such story...

[Click here](#) to read Jake’s story.

“May those... in the shadows be seen by those in the sun” | The Sisters of The Good Samaritan

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CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2025



Everyone deserves access to the essentials needed to live with dignity. Even in difficult times, people should feel secure knowing they can afford a home, put food on the table, pay their bills, and maintain their health. This is especially true at Christmas, when people should be able to enjoy the Festive season without stressing over unpaid bills, high rents, and the costs of providing a Christmas gift or meal for loved ones.

Australia's persistent cost of living pressures are far from over. The cycle of poverty and disadvantage still continues for some, with effects that are long term and intergenerational. At St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, we are seeing short term safety nets being regularly relied upon for ongoing relief. Many of the people we support are being trapped in a cycle of disadvantage and poverty from ongoing high costs of living, the housing crisis and food insecurity.

The 2025 Vinnies Christmas Appeal will focus on this cycle, so that we may stop its progression and provide assistance that makes a lasting impact and improvement in people's lives.

For a second year in a row, our Members have helped over 100,000 people across the state with immediate intervention, safe housing, alongside food, clothing and medical aid. We continue to help people throughout their journey of rebuilding with counselling, education, vocational and life skills training.

The Society is grateful to our dedicated Members for the important role they play in raising funds for the Christmas Appeal. Funds raised will directly support our core programs, providing vital assistance to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, poverty, and cost of living pressures.

The Christmas Appeal launched on 1 November 2025. Materials to support your Christmas Appeal efforts, such as posters, donation envelopes and Conference booklets have been available since 13 October 2025.





Taking Schools Engagement to New Heights!

What an incredible day on Wednesday 5 June, as around 200 students and families came through the gates of Katoomba Public School for the Vinnies Expo!

This high-energy community event brought together students, parents, and staff to explore how Vinnies supports the local community — and how everyone can be part of that mission! From learning about services at the Katoomba Vinnies Family Assistance Centre to meeting the passionate Katoomba Conference volunteers, there was something for everyone.

Special thanks to: Katoomba Conference and Penrith Vinnies Support Centre— sharing how we walk alongside people doing it tough, and giving out beanies. Vinnies Schools & Membership Team— inspiring students and families to connect, contribute, and care. We also promoted volunteering in Vinnies Shops showing how simple actions can make a big difference.

Huge thanks to Katoomba Public School for the warm welcome, and to everyone who joined us. *Let's keep reaching new heights together — one act of kindness at a time!*

Group photo (left to right): Earnest Henry (GWS MCEC), Roydon Ng (Metro Schools Engagement Officer), Katoomba Public School Principal Rhiannon Roberts, Pamela Edwards (Katoomba Conference Volunteer), Russell Smith (Katoomba Conference President).



THANK
YOU

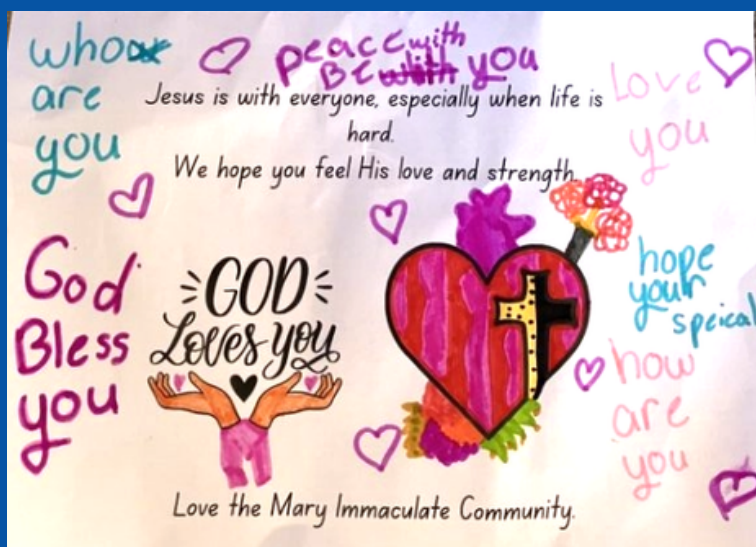
**BLACKTOWN VINNIES
SUPPORT CENTRE**

Nazreen Dean
Blacktown VSC coordinator

Our volunteers attended the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award Ceremony, where the Blacktown VSC was proud to be nominated as the Outer Western Sydney Volunteer Team of the Year. While we didn't take home the award, we are truly honoured to have been recognised and nominated for the good work we do in our community.

Congratulations to all the award recipients on the day! A special thank you and well done to our amazing team of volunteers and students at the Blacktown VSC — I am so proud of all your dedication, hard work, and the positive impact you continue to make.

In our Greater Western Sydney school communities



Mary Immaculate Quakers Hills supporting the Winter Appeal and Vinnies Vans

Following on from the successful talks given at Mary Immaculate Primary School Quakers Hill, the students prepared and donated over 100 packs of toiletry items for the Vinnies Van.

It was heartwarming to see the love and care that the students put into preparing these packs. Each pack contains a handwritten note from the students, which adds a personal touch that I am sure will be greatly appreciated by the recipients.

We also received a generous donation of over 300 beanies, scarves, and winter socks from **St Joseph's Primary School Schofields NSW!**

This donation was a result of the recent winter appeal they conducted, and we are incredibly grateful for their support!

Perera, Quakers Hill Conference



Sacred Heart Primary School, Westmead, participated in the Vinnies Winter Sleepout



Students engaged in a range of activities designed to raise awareness of homelessness and to reflect on the challenges faced by those living without secure shelter. During the evening, students also heard from two members of the St Vincent de Paul Metropolitan team, who shared valuable insights into the life of St Vincent de Paul, the history of the Society, and the important works carried out in the community today. The evening concluded with a prayerful liturgy, reminding everyone of the dignity and hope that Christ brings to all. Then the kids and staff settled in the Church basement for a cold and wet evening to experience what it is truly like to be homeless.

With the generous support of the school community, the event raised \$1,229 to support the work of St Vincent de Paul Society. Sacred Heart is proud of the students for their commitment to social justice and grateful for the opportunity to stand in solidarity with the St Vincent de Paul Society in its mission to bring compassion, dignity, and hope to those most in need.

- Miss Cecilienne-Mae Matienzo
Acting religious education coordinator



Out and About in Community



Stanhope Gardens conference Soup Night

I am delighted to share some exciting news about the recent Soup Night event hosted by the St Vincent de Paul Society at Stanhope Gardens conference, NSW. The night was an incredible success, with nearly 100 soups sold!

We owe a special thank you to all the wonderful parishioners of St John 23rd Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens, NSW. Their support and generosity truly made a difference. Thanks to their enthusiastic participation and kind donations, we managed to raise an impressive \$609.50 from soup sales and an additional \$160 from donations.

The funds raised will go a long way in supporting families who are experiencing financial hardships and homelessness due to factors such as job loss, health issues, or mental illnesses. Your unwavering support has significantly impacted the lives of those in need, and we couldn't be more grateful. Thank you all for your kindness to make this event such a memorable success.

Roger Perera

Conference Member - Stanhope Gardens NSW



Kellyville morning tea- member recruitment drive



**Blacktown Vinnies Support Centre
Giving out Easter Hampers in the
community**



The Good Works Summit

It was the biggest gathering of Vincentians in decades!

Such an incredible experience seeing everyone come together in the spirit of service and collaboration. We were fortunate to hear from inspiring guest speakers, including Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Federal Minister for Social Services, and Yolanda Saiz, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society, along with thought-provoking panel discussions on the changing landscape of community support.

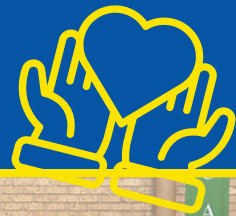
The workshops provided valuable opportunities to open conversations and share insights on: Strengthening local relationships to drive community impact, Expanding the scope of services in housing, health, addiction and disability, Celebrating regional success stories that continue to inspire

GWS CEO Meet and Greet

It was a great gathering of members, volunteers, and staff from across Greater Western Sydney all coming together to engage with CEO Yolanda Saiz and her leadership team. The morning provided an excellent opportunity for members to reconnect and exchange valuable insights.



Richmond Conference celebration of St Vincent de Paul's Feast Day



We were delighted to welcome students from St Monica's Primary School and Bede Polding College, who joined us for this special occasion. During the celebration, Father Raymond presented certificates of appreciation on behalf of Vinnies.

Richmond Conference is truly grateful for the strong relationship we share with our local Catholic schools. Their ongoing support and commitment play a vital role in improving the lives of our community—whether through food hampers or the many wonderful activities they are involved in. We deeply value their generosity and the positive impact they bring.



Catherine Little John, Richmond Conference



Celebrating Dashain at Blacktown VSC

This week, Blacktown VSC joined our students in celebrating Dashain, the longest and most significant festival in Nepal, symbolising the victory of good over evil. For many of our students, who are far from family, it can be difficult to celebrate such an important cultural and religious occasion. That's why we wanted to make this Dashain truly special. Our staff came together in traditional outfits, sharing food, sweets, and lots of joy. The smiles on our students' faces said it all — one student shared,

"Thank you so much for making this year's Dashain so special for us and helping us celebrate."

At Blacktown VSC, we are proud to create a place where everyone feels at home, supported, and celebrated.

Nazareen Dean, Blacktown VSC coordinator

MEMBER TRAINING SESSIONS

Join our upcoming online training sessions
from the comfort of your own home!



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

These live sessions, hosted on Microsoft Teams by the Vinnies State Learning Team (Linda, Joanna, and Edna), will help you complete the required modules for members and volunteers to keep your membership up to date.

To participate, simply register for the session(s) you'd like to attend using the links below. Once registered, you'll receive the Teams meeting link.

For questions or support, please contact your Member & Community Engagement Coordinator: MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au **More information can also be found on the Vinnies website:** <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/>

VINNIES ORIENTATION

Tuesday 18th November 10 -11.30am
Tuesday 16th December 3-4.30pm

Register Here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>

CODE OF CONDUCT

Wednesday 5th November 11am-12pm
Thursday 13th November 12-1pm
Monday 1st December 3-4pm

Register here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

Monday 10th November 10-11am
Thursday 20th November 3-4pm
Monday 8th December 11am-12pm

Register here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>

SAFETY INDUCTION

Tuesday 4th November 3-4pm
Wednesday 12th November 2-3pm
Wednesday 26th November 10-11am

Register here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>



On a cold September evening, over 100 participants gathered at Western Sydney University for the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout, raising awareness and vital funds to support people experiencing homelessness. The event brought together Vinnies Members and volunteers, school students, and community Members who braved the chill to better understand the daily reality faced by thousands across NSW.

The night featured powerful stories from people with lived experience, inspiring speeches, and interactive activities like the “Walk in Their Shoes” Reflection Path and the Vinnies Information Stalls. Live music by the incredible Forbes Street Band added warmth to the night. While some participants stayed the night, others joined for the evening program, all united in their commitment to making a difference.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout has already raised about \$67,000. Special acknowledgement goes to the fundraising efforts of our Members, staff and volunteers. These funds will go directly towards Vinnies Conferences and programs across Sydney, Broken Bay and Greater Western Sydney, providing food, crisis accommodation, financial assistance, and pathways to stable housing.

Events like this remind us that homelessness is more than statistics; it’s about people, families, and communities. By standing together, we shine a light on the issue and take action towards creating a more compassionate and just society.

*A heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated, donated, or volunteered,
your impact is real and lasting!*

Photos from the night are available to view on the [MAVS Website](https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/articles/greater-sydney-community-sleepout-2025/)
<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/articles/greater-sydney-community-sleepout-2025/>

Thank you to our local event sponsors:



Vinnies Secondary School Engagements and Vinnies Service Medallion



 Vinnies
Service Medallion

CHANGE STARTS HERE

Secondary students program information



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW *good works*



TAKE THE FIRST STEPS TO CREATING CHANGE!

The Vinnies Service Medallion (VSM) recognises and celebrates the contributions of secondary students (Years 7–12) to community service, leadership, advocacy, and fundraising.

Gain real world skills and experience, make a tangible impact on your local community and receive formal recognition for completing each stage of the program to build your resume for university and the workplace!



RECOGNITION FOR YOUR GROWTH

Participating in the VSM will provide opportunities to develop your leadership and communications skills and provide real-world experiences in Social Justice and Community Engagement.

Bronze



Silver



Gold



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The VSM program is aimed at secondary students, ranging from Year 7 to Year 12. The program is inclusive and strives to be accessible to all interested students. Participate with your school group or join as an individual. Participation in the Vinnies Service Medallion is free of charge, and all secondary students are welcome.



CONTACT US

Are you a student, or a teacher/parent who knows students who would benefit from this program?

Scan the QR code or visit our
website here: [youthnsw.vinnies.org.au/
vinnies-service-medallion](http://youthnsw.vinnies.org.au/vinnies-service-medallion)



For more information regarding Vinnies Secondary School engagements and the Vinnies Service Medallion, please email: metroschools@vinnies.org.au

Young Leaders of Hope



Over two days in late July, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) Strathfield campus became a vibrant gathering place of faith, compassion and leadership as students and teachers from across the Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay dioceses came together to grow in the mission of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Wednesday 24 July, more than 220 primary school students from 28 schools attended the annual Mini Vinnies Gathering. The day invited students to reflect on how they can be leaders of hope, living out the Gospel call to love and serve others—especially those experiencing hardship. Through engaging workshops and reflections, students explored real-world issues including the cost of living, housing, and homelessness, while learning about the work of Vinnies Support Centres, the Vinnies Van, and caring for God's creation through stewardship. Students were encouraged to respond with compassion and action through their Mini Vinnies groups. They discovered that even small acts of kindness, rooted in love and justice, can reflect the light of Christ in the world.

Thursday 25 July, the inaugural Vinnies Secondary Schools Gathering brought together 90 high school students and teachers to deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and how faith can inspire leadership and advocacy for the poor and marginalised. The day included inspiring talks, group activities, and moments of reflection that challenged students to think critically about social justice. They explored how to put faith into action and walk alongside those in need—just as Jesus did. The passion, energy, and spiritual maturity of the students was uplifting. Many shared their commitment to continuing the mission of Vinnies in their schools and parishes, acting as witnesses to God's love through service.

These two days were a powerful reminder that young people are not just the future of the Church—they are the present. Through their generosity, faith, and courage, they are already making Christ's presence known in the world. "It's truly inspiring to witness so many young people embrace the call to be leaders of hope," said Metro Vinnies Schools Engagement Team (Chris Nolan, Ketaki Wasnikar, Roydon Ng). "Their energy, compassion, and commitment to social justice reflect the very heart of our mission—to walk alongside those in need with love, dignity and faith. We look forward to continuing this journey with schools across the dioceses."

Looking ahead, the St Vincent de Paul Society is excited to continue nurturing these young leaders of faith. Planning is already underway for next year's gatherings—to be even more enriching, prayerful, and impactful for students answering the call to love and serve.



BUSKING FOR VINNIES

Vinnies
good works



Celebrating 31 Years of Busking for Vinnies - Music, Mission & Community

In August 2025, the 31st annual Busking for Vinnies once again brought the Vincentian spirit to life across Greater Western Sydney. Held in Centenary Square, Parramatta and, for the first time, in Springwood Town Square, the program highlighted how music can become a ministry of connection, drawing together schools, Conferences, and local communities in a public celebration of faith and service.

Across seven performances, Catholic schools filled civic spaces with joy, resilience, and energy. The line-up featured St Columba's Catholic College (Springwood), Gilroy Catholic College (Castle Hill), Catherine McAuley (Westmead), Parramatta Marist (Westmead), Our Lady of Mercy College (Parramatta), Mount St Benedict College (Pennant Hills), St Edmund's College (Wahroonga), and John Paul II Catholic College (Schofields). Rain, wind or sunshine never stopped the music — from string quartets to pop favourites, hymns, and even drumming on buckets. Each performance drew in workers, families, marketgoers, and passers-by, turning public squares into spaces of welcome, encounter, and joy.

More than 30 individuals were referred to Vinnies Support Centres through the presence of Springwood Conference and Winston Hills Conference. Members greeted people, shared information, and created pathways to support, ensuring the Vincentian mission was not only seen but lived. Their work demonstrated Catholic Social Teaching in practice — affirming dignity, fostering solidarity, and walking with those experiencing hardship.

“Busking for Vinnies is faith lived boldly in public,” said Roydon Ng, Schools Engagement Officer. “Every song and every smile are a reminder that the Vincentian spirit is alive in our schools and communities.”

The program's impact was amplified by collaboration. Schools provided talent and youthful energy, Conferences ensured mission remained central, and civic partners created safe and vibrant spaces. The City of Parramatta Council and Blue Mountains City Council played vital roles, providing venues, marquees, power, and logistical support that made the events possible despite challenging weather.

“This year's community engagement shows what's possible when Conferences, schools, and civic partners come together,” added Roydon Ng. “The Vincentian charism thrives when it is shared openly in the heart of our public spaces.”

As Busking for Vinnies looks ahead to 2026, planning is already underway to explore new and further locations. With its unique blend of music, mission, and community, the program remains a flagship expression of faith in action and an invitation to walk together in hope.

Special acknowledgment goes to John Neylan, Vinnies volunteer and co-coordinator of Busking for Vinnies, for his invaluable role in guiding the Parramatta series of events. A video from Busking for Vinnies 2026 in Parramatta featuring Gilroy Catholic College (Castle Hill) is available at <https://youthnsw.vinnies.org.au/busking/>

Conference members are warmly invited to join next year as volunteers and ambassadors for local support services. For more information, please contact roydon.ng@vinnies.org.au

Roydon Ng, Metro Schools Engagement Officer



Child Protection Week was held on 7 - 13 September 2025



"Child abuse and neglect is preventable. If we all work together as a community, we can create an Australia where all children can grow up safe and well. What role can you play in supporting children and their families?"

Leesa Waters, CEO, NAPCAN

Vinnies NSW is demonstrating a strong commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation by actively working towards compliance with multiple sets of standards and relevant legislation.

**Contact Vinnies Safeguarding
1800 4 SUPPORT**

MAVS HUB

Safeguarding Children & Young People

[LINK TO WEBSITE](https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/resources/safeguarding-children-vulnerable-adults/safeguarding-children-young-people/)

<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/resources/safeguarding-children-vulnerable-adults/safeguarding-children-young-people/>



Watch here: Geraldine Doogue and Robert Fitzgerald (former Commissioner) discuss 'What is a Child Safe Organisation'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ8WDi_-BPU