



Newsletter

November 2023

Broken Bay Central Council President - Michelle Chahine's Message

As we approach the end of the year, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new Regional Director, Ash, who has been with us for a couple of months now. Ash has hit the ground running and has already made a positive impact within our community. We are thrilled to have her on board and are excited for the future under her leadership.

As we gear up for the Christmas season, we are preparing for our annual Christmas Appeal. This year, we aim to spread the joy and love of Christmas to those in need, and we hope to have your support in making this a success.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all of our hardworking staff who have been dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of those in need and in their support of the work of our members. Your commitment and hard work do not go unnoticed, and we are grateful for each and every one of you.

I would also like to commend the great work of our members who joined and supported the Greater Western Sydney Sleepout. Your dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness is truly inspiring.

Following the recent referendum results for the Voice to Parliament, we are reminded of our commitment to reconciliation and recognition of First Nations people. As an organisation, we stand in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters and will continue to work towards a better future based on understanding, respect, and social justice. We are committed to listening and being guided by them in our efforts.

On a final note, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 15 Northern Beaches members who have been awarded lifetime membership for their dedication and service to Vinnies for over 20 years. Your unwavering commitment and hard work have made a significant impact on our community, and we are truly grateful for your contributions.



Thank you again to all our members for your continued support and for being a part of our St Vincent De Paul Broken Bay family. May the spirit of Christmas fill your hearts with joy, love, and compassion.

Michelle Chahine, Broken Bay Central Council President

Regional Director Metropolitan - Ashvini Ambihaipahar's Message

It has been several months since I commenced as the new Regional Director - Metro and it is fair to say I have hit the ground running! I have been able to meet many passionate members, volunteers and staff across the Broken Bay Central Council (BBCC) and across Metro learning more about the good works performed to support and serve the community. I have been able to visit all the VSCs, worked at a number of VSCs for the day (eg interviewing clients and packing shelves) and also started doing home visits. This has helped me grasp what members/volunteers and staff do and understand some of the challenges.

I was able to attend visit St Joseph Workshop, West Gosford, and meet very talented members producing beautiful furniture. I also was able to visit the One Meal, Brookvale and look at the amazing meals prepared which is provided to many people in need across Metro.

I have enjoyed attending several Festival Masses in recent weeks!

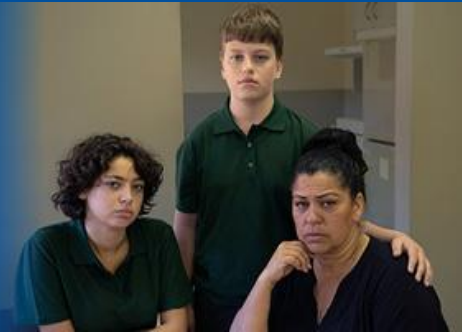
Christmas time is a very important time not only spiritually but also it can be a challenging time for those in need in our community. My team will be working very hard to ensure we can help and support you to be able to deliver and serve your community.



Thank you for the very warm welcome from everyone! I look forward to connecting with more members, listening to you and ensuring we continue championing the mission, vision and aspiration of Vinnies!

**Ashvini Ambihaipahar
Regional Director, Metropolitan**

CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2023



This Christmas, we are focussing on the ongoing impacts of the cost of living crisis which has seen already vulnerable people pushed into poverty with barely anything to hold on to and facing the brink of homelessness.

The cost of living crisis is causing families, who were already struggling, further hardship and driving a growing number of people to seek assistance for the first time. Workers in full-time employment, families on dual incomes and renters burdened by the soaring cost of housing have turned to the Society through necessity. Alarming, the number of people turning to our members for the first time has increased from one-in-four to one-in-three over the past year. While cost of living pressures have occurred across the board, the most acute impacts are felt by those with the least capacity to absorb the financial, social and wellbeing blows.

Our Christmas Appeal plays a critical role in ensuring our members are able to continue to provide support to the people we assist and that our services are able to meet their needs.

The Society thanks our dedicated members for the important role they play in raising funds for the Christmas Appeal so we can continue give a hand up to those in our community who need it the most. The Christmas Appeal is launched on 1 November 2023. Materials to support your Christmas Appeal efforts, such as posters, donation envelopes and conference booklets have now been sent out to Conferences.

- Ai-Lin Crisford, Manager, Direct Marketing



NSW Vinnies Community Sleepouts shine the light on homelessness.

On Friday 25 August, community members across NSW participated in the Vinnies Community Sleepout to raise much needed awareness and funds for Vinnies services and programs.

Over 290 participants braved the cold and raised over \$224,000 across five locations. The services to benefit from the funds raised include Vinnies Nagle Centre and Quamby Support Services in Albury, Freeman House in Armidale, Fred's Place in Tweed heads, the Micah Hub in Wagga Wagga and the Western Sydney Vinnies Support Centres.

Thank you to Shantelle Lidden, Ana Suarez, Phil Donnan, Kim Kennedy, Ashleigh Machell and Janice Stokes for their tireless work in managing their Sleepouts.

Since its inception in 2018, community members have rallied together in this state-wide effort raising over \$1 million to help people in both regional and metro NSW.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported, participated in, donated to, and sponsored this year's NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout. Your contributions will have a significant impact at a time when so many people are doing it tough.



Broken Bay supports Greater Western Sydney Sleepout

On Friday 25 August, five Broken Bay members – El Herlianto, Barry Finch and myself, with Father Joseph of Forestville parish, as well as Northern Beaches members Mick O’Farrell and Rex Harding – went to the Vinnies sleep-out at the University of Western Sydney. The aim of the sleepout is to raise funds for Vinnies to supply accommodation for the homeless in western Sydney.



The homelessness problem is worse there than around Forestville, but our local conference has helped three clients facing eviction this year. That is a big cost as rents for a two-bedroom unit are at least \$650 per week, and we have seen clients who are weeks behind in the rent.

The format of the evening was firstly a meet and greet. There are some wonderfully dedicated people in Vinnies.

Other fundraising activities included guessing games, raffles and a silent auction.

The fare for the evening was packet soup and a roll. The total calories for this meal was about 300 – well short of the 800 calories recommended for an evening meal.

Then came the information sessions about homelessness. There was an avalanche of statistics but my key takeaways were as follows:

1. There are over 120,000 people homeless in Australia every night (homelessness is defined as rough sleeping, couch surfing or grossly overcrowded accommodation).

2. Since 1996, the population of Australia has increased by 41% but the amount of government housing has increased by only 3-4%.

3. In the aftermath of the floods in the Riverstone electorate along the Hawkesbury river, overnight 25 families were made homeless as their rented accommodation was to be bulldozed.

4. If you have a homeless upbringing, you are much more likely to be homeless yourself.

There was also an interesting film clip. A large group of young people (say 15-25 years old) were lined up and advised that there was to be a foot race with a \$100 prize to the winner. However, there were a few quirks to the race.

The organiser said to the contestants that if they answered “yes” to any of the following questions, they could take two steps forward viz.

1. *Are your parents still married?*
2. *Did you get a good private education?*
3. *Did you ever have a tutor to help you with difficult subjects?*
4. *Did you always know where you would be sleeping the next night?*
5. *Did you always know there would be food on the table that night?*

The organiser made the point that none of these advantages from yes answers were due to contestants’ own ability, they were gifts from others. But the telling point of the story was that when the starting signal was given, those at the back of the pack, made no attempt to even start the race, assessing it was a useless endeavour; those in the middle just shuffled along; but those at the front went flat out.

This was a metaphor for life, with those who are disadvantaged from the start, being less likely to succeed.

We left to do our sleepout at home, but the hardier, and may I say younger, folk slept out on the grass.

They were provided with two sheets of cardboard one to lie on the grass and the other to be bent in the form of a teepee, to keep out the wind, at least to some extent. A miserable night seemed to be guaranteed, with the temperature dropping to 8 deg C.

Story continues on page 4...

Broken Bay supports Greater Western Sydney Sleepout

I did my sleepout on my deck. I learnt my lesson from my previous sleepout and built a bit of a shelter from the deck table. Even a mild wind makes sleeping outside a difficult experience. I kept warm, and did sleep, but as was the case in my previous sleepout, I woke up tired. Mattresses and a warm room are a great combination!

Overall, we met our local fundraising target of \$2000 and the whole sleepout for Western Sydney met its target of \$50,000. So, a big "thank you" to all the donors.

Many thanks,

John Heike, Member, Forestville Our Lady of Good Counsel Conference

P.S. This fundraising is just a drop in the bucket. The problem requires massive investment. My back-of-the-envelope economics says that if you have a million dollars to invest you can put it in a good super fund and get a return of around 8% tax paid with no hassle. Putting it into a two-bedroom unit, probably gets you a return of 2-3% before tax, assuming you have a good tenant and you don't have too many special levies made by the body corporate. Investing in real estate is predicated on good capital gain, and resale, possibly denying your tenant stability. So much as I would like the private rental market to solve the homelessness crisis, the economics don't work. Social housing is the only answer.



Jordan - Homeless No More!

Since Jordan was 18 years old, he has been impacted by homelessness. He has been long-term homeless after having to leave the family home on the Central Coast.

Jordan receives a Youth Allowance and this has limited his options in applying for affordable rental accommodation within the Central Coast. Although multiple rental properties have been applied for, without a rental history, he was unsuccessful each time.

Department of Community & Justice (DCJ) has requirements to meet, although they are able to provide up to 28 days Temporary Accommodation (TA) each year. This affected Jordan greatly. He has had to sleep out on the street, sleep rough in parks, train stations and bus stops.

He has been staying anywhere between Sydney, Central Coast, Newcastle and Kempsey. As a result, his health has also been impacted with poor health, back issues and anxiety.

Within the last three years, Jordan has had to rely on the support of charitable organisations like Vinnies for emergency support and Government organisations like "Links2home", Doorways Uniting Wyong and DCJ to support him with Temporary Accommodation.



Approximately three years ago, Jordan came into Wyong Vinnies Support Centre asking for support with housing and food. In my role as Support Centre Coordinator, I've been supporting him through many aspects of his life (Food, Clothing, Furniture, Travel and many referrals).

A few days ago, with the assistance of me and conference members,

Jordan applied for a stable affordable residence within a caravan park on the Central Coast. He has received the wonderful news that he has now secured an affordable, stable, and safe rental property within the caravan park and he moved in on Thursday 28th September 2023.

Jordan, now 21 years old, is ecstatic that he has finally secured a rental property and he is so grateful for all the assistance, support and guidance being provided by myself and the team of volunteers and conference members/presidents within the welfare, retail and warehouse sectors.

Jordan says: "I'm forever grateful and appreciative of all the support and assistance Brad and his team have provided me throughout my journey."

Bradley Dingle, Vinnies Support Centre Coordinator, Wyong



The Society continues to walk together with First Nations people towards Reconciliation

In October, Australians voted on whether to recognise First Nations people in our Constitution through a Voice to Parliament. The referendum gave us the right to participate in a historic moment to shape a more just and compassionate Australia. The negative outcome of the referendum, which would have enabled First Nations peoples to have a greater say in decisions impacting their families and communities, is deeply disappointing. It is now time for a period of national reflection about how we can continue the path towards reconciliation with our First Nations peoples and what this outcome means for our nation.

The Society's longstanding support for the Uluru Statement From the Heart is a matter of social justice, not politics. First Nations people comprise about one-quarter of the people the Society works with and assists.

Their disadvantage is a result of years of injustice suffered from the beginning of colonisation. The Society's support for constitutional recognition of First Nations people through the Voice derives from, and is informed by, our Good Works of charity and justice.

As The Rule states, the Society helps the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored. (I #7.5)

A grateful thank you to members, volunteers and employees who actively promoted, and continue to promote, the need for a fairer and better future in solidarity with our First Nations brothers and sisters. Over the course of the campaign, our leaders joined with other faith based organisations to meet with key First Nations leaders at a [Day](#)

[of engagement at Parliament House](#). Open letters to Parliamentarians were sent as well as a meeting held with Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney.

Our Social Justice State Advisory Committee members promoted the Voice in their regions, including 'Walking for Yes' and organising information gatherings. We issued 380 plus Uluru resource kits to our conferences along with 230 information packs and posters to our retail stores. We also developed a suite of trusted [Uluru Statement From the](#)

[Heart Resources](#). The Society's informed voice joined with First Nations people and a chorus of others, and we are proud to have walked together with them during the campaign. We now look to the voices of First Nations people as the future of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and its call for a Voice, Treaty, Truth, is reflected on and determined.

Given the result of the referendum, and the difficult and divisive campaign leading up to it, we must acknowledge and heal the deep divisions that have been exposed within our society if we are to move forward as a nation.

Church leaders have asked us to be kind to one another in the aftermath of the referendum, and foremost in our thoughts, words and deeds must be for our First Nations brothers and sisters who have been the subject of torrid debate.

Over the coming months and years, the Society will continue to work with First Nations people towards reconciliation and recognition. We will continue to listen to, and be guided by, them as to how we can move towards a better future – a future based on understanding, respect, and social justice.

Jodi Denehy, Policy and Advocacy Team



Who Pays the Price for a Society Divided?

Rosalie Rendu Forum 2023

In the past year alone, the number of people reaching out to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW for the first time has risen from one in four to one in three.

This stark surge in calls for assistance has been felt by people already doing it tough and others who have never needed to seek the support of charities prior to the current moment.

With interest rates hitting levels not seen for decades and inflation doing likewise, the increasing cost of living has been felt by everyone – however those with the least are being the hardest hit and have the least capacity to weather the blows.

As many people consider this crisis purely in economic terms, the 2023 Rosalie Rendu Forum sought to look further at the impact of the rising cost of living and its consequences on vulnerable members of the community – and on society as a whole – with the theme “Cost of Living: who pays the price for a society divided?”.

Taking place during Anti-Poverty Week, the annual event, named in recognition of Sister Rosalie Rendu, saw an acclaimed group of women come together at the University of Notre Dame’s Broadway Campus for the first in-person Rosalie Rendu Forum since 2019.

Following a Welcome to Country from Yvonne Weldon, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, in recognition of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and introduction from Yolanda Saiz (CEO St Vincent de Paul Society NSW), host Ashvini Ambihapahar (Regional Director St Vincent de Paul Society NSW) spoke on the theme before introducing a panel of five expert speakers.

Sister Carmel Hanson RSJ; Joanna Quilty (CEO NSW Council for Social Service); Dr Lisa Buxton (EO Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney); Yumi Lee (CEO NSW Older Women’s Network); and Verity Firth (UTS Pro Vice-Chancellor for Social Justice and Inclusion) comprised the esteemed panel.

Sister Hanson delivered a spiritual reflection on the history of Sister Rosalie Rendu, who played an integral role in teaching Frederic Ozanam, who would go on to establish the Society of St Vincent de Paul, during the 18th century, “behind every great man is a greater woman.”

Issues raised during the course of the 90-minute discussion included the changing demographics of economic hardship,

the ongoing disadvantage and poorer outcomes faced by First Nations, rates of older women experiencing homelessness, and the understanding of collective action as a means of addressing inequality.

“We still have parts of Sydney and regional NSW where there are poverty rates for kids up around 40%. That is a shocking and astounding figure when we know that the lifetime impacts of growing up in poverty are real and that the life chances of these kids are going to be seriously curtailed because of that experience.” - Joanna Quilty

“There is a need to move away from the continual deficit model of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funding but also the approaches to our education, housing, health and wellbeing. [We need] to recognise Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, and develop place-based, strength-based approaches that encourage a strong sense of cultural identity and a sense of belonging.” - Dr Lisa Buxton

“The demonisation of the poor continues to this day in how we talk about poverty. The homeless are homeless, let’s be clear about it, because there are not enough safe, accessible, affordable homes built to accommodate all of us in all our income brackets. The poor are also poor because the income support system is not fit for purpose and purposely keeps payment below the poverty line.” - Yumi Lee

“In our society a lack of money means a lack of power; and the life experience of those facing disadvantage is often one that constantly reiterates to them that they do not have the agency to create change. Inequality forces disengagement and disengagement leads to social isolation. Social isolation worsens education outcomes and so the cycle continues.” - Verity Firth

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW would like to thank Sr Hanson, Ms Quilty, Dr Buxton, Ms Lee, Ms Firth, Ms Ambihapahar and the University of Notre Dame for their involvement in another tremendous Rosalie Rendu Forum.

Rob Crosby, Communications Coordinator



L-R: Yolanda Saiz, Verity Firth, Joanna Quilty, Yumi Lee, Sr Carmel Hanson, Lisa Buxton and Ashvini Ambihapahar



My Volunteering Experience

Keynote address of Shirley Kelynack, Hornsby Regional President, to the Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Community College *Community Connections Open Day*. 27 April 2023

I guess my volunteering days really started when I was a small girl, growing up in a little village in Victoria.

My mother introduced my brother and me to caring for others very early in our lives. If someone was sick in the village, we would be sent off with a basket of home-made goodies and instructed to bring the ironing back etc.

I volunteered at the schools my children attended and at the Mercy Life Centre – caring for single mums in the community.

Later I really started to volunteer in a bigger way. My children were making their own ways in life. I needed to prepare for the 'empty nest' syndrome and also for when my working days finished.

All of my different roles in volunteering have somehow led to other volunteering roles.

I answered an advertisement in the local paper to train to become a Lifeline telephone counsellor. I was fortunate enough to be accepted into the training... what an amazing experience that was. I learnt so many skills: listening, really listening; empathy; self-awareness; how to assist people from all walks of life. I stayed with Lifeline for twelve years. And I had other roles within Lifeline as well – being a board member, delivering training etc.

I heard stories that I could not have imagined. So many broken people. So much aloneness and lonely people. Not everyone had sad stories – some would share their good stories.

I used to try to imagine what that would be like not to have anyone in their lives to share with. Thank goodness we have people who give their time to be there for them. What a privilege that people trusted us enough to share their stories.

My Lifeline training equipped me well enough to manage any call that came over the course of my shift. I highly recommend the Lifeline training.

As I mentioned before – one volunteering role seemed to



lead to another.

Whilst working for Lifeline, our local police paid us a visit. They were looking for volunteers to sit in with juveniles while they were being interviewed. I volunteered for that.

One of my first sit ins was with a young person who was waiting to be charged. And to make conversation, I commented on how healthy all the pot plants in the room were looking. I asked what variety of plants they were.

Wow! I was off on my next learning experience.

The young person informed me that the plants belonged to them and that they were marijuana. The young person then proceeded to tell me how to smoke the stuff and how to use a bong! Um... quite interesting.

Article continues on page 8...

My Volunteering Experience

After some time, I was informed by the police that they were running a volunteer training program for people to become 'VIP's – Volunteers In Policing. I was invited to join. This brought great excitement to me and off to the Police Academy in Goulburn I went. After the training I worked in the station at Hornsby. I worked in the domestic violence courts with the police prosecutors and the domestic violence officers. I supported victims of crime and became a Peer Support Officer.

One story I would like to share with you – I was asked to visit a man who had a death in the family and who needed support. I asked the man what I could do that would help him the most. He asked me if I could help him move the deceased family member out of the unit. I asked why the deceased person had not been taken away. The man informed me they had no money and an undertaker would not help unless they could pay.

I thought, "What do I do now?!" I had never arranged a funeral before, let alone one where there was no money available. I said to the man, "I will not let you down".

Looking around his unit I found a card from the St Vincent de Paul Society. I really didn't know too much about Vinnies at the time, but thought that I would try and make a call to them, which I did. Within half an hour it had all been arranged for a funeral director to come. I was so impressed. I felt what a fantastic organisation and thought I would join them when time permitted.

When I arrived back at the police station and gave in my report, they asked, "What would you have done if you couldn't have arranged something?" I said, "I guess I would have had to store the deceased in my garage!" It became quite a joke around the station – They would ask, "Have you been storing any bodies in your garage lately Shirley?"

"I am most grateful for all the opportunities I have had with my volunteering. I have been challenged. My self-esteem has been built. It has been a great learning experience... I would highly recommend volunteering. Find something that interests you and seek it out. Volunteers are needed everywhere."

I stayed with the police for 20 years and enjoyed every single moment. Our police are wonderful and it is an eye opener to see what can happen in a day in the life of a police officer.

I joined the Society of St Vincent de Paul in 2005. It's a role I'm still very much

involved in. I was asked to be a Conference President. The thought of it terrified me. I had never run a cat fight let alone a meeting where I was the only woman present. I did become the Conference President and I'm still in that role. That prepared me to become a Regional President and I am now in both roles.

Vinnies is such a wonderful organisation. So much goes on in the background. We are not just our stores. We are mainly staffed by volunteers.

We have a welfare section above our store in Hornsby – the Vinnies Support Centre. People needing assistance come there. Some are referred on for home visits, which our Conference members look after. In the Centre, people who are homeless can come for assistance. They can have

a shower, a coffee, a meal or hot pie. We supply them with fresh clothing, a blanket, sleeping bag – whatever their need is. We give out food parcels to people who need our support.

The money we make in our shops goes towards helping us supporting our people in need. If you would like to volunteer, you would be most welcome. You may not want to volunteer in a role where you are dealing with people with problems. So, remember that Lifeline and Vinnies both have shops and we are always looking for volunteers.

As I was saying, one volunteering role has led to another. Would you believe that I was quietly working away at Vinnies and I was ...

Article continues on page 9...



My Volunteering Experience

informed that two very high-profile people from this very college wanted to see me. I thought, "How wonderful – they want to bring across their new program to the Vinnies Support Centre!" How wrong I was. They had another agenda. They were inviting me to join the college board. I was informed it held only a few meetings each year. I wondered what I had to offer. But they talked me into it!

They have challenged me further. I was asked to be a guest speaker for today's Community Connections Open Day. I almost passed out with shock as public speaking is not my most favourite thing at all.

At first I said, "No, I could not possibly do that!" After I had time to recover from the shock and think about it, I decided that, if I could encourage one person to become a volunteer, then it would be worth it. I can highly recommend this college – either to volunteer or to do some of the great courses they have to offer.

I am most grateful for all the opportunities I have had with my volunteering. I have been challenged. My self-esteem has been built. It has been a great learning experience. I am motivated and fulfilled. I have a purpose to get out of my bed each day. I have made wonderful friends. My family do not have to worry about me being lonely, sitting at home feeling sorry for myself. I feel happy every day.

Hopefully I have helped some people along the way. I would highly recommend volunteering. Find something that interests you and seek it out. Volunteers are needed everywhere.

If you cannot volunteer for whatever reason, there is one thing that you can do...

Smile at a person whom you do not know. Your smile may help someone who is carrying a heavy burden or who has a very sad story. Your smile will make a difference.

Thank you.

The great gift of Volunteers and Volunteering!

Earlier this year, Hornsby Support Centre Coordinator Jodie Davidson received this wonderful message of thanks from a student who had just completed a fieldwork placement with Jodie, Shirley and the wonderful team at Hornsby.

It shows the generosity of every person who volunteers and also the fulfilment and new life perspectives that volunteering has to offer those who step forward to give of themselves and their time.

Dear Jodie,

I hope this email finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing this email to express my sincere gratitude to you for being my supervisor during my fieldwork placement at Vinnies Hornsby. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with you and the rest of the team, and I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the invaluable experience.

Working with you all was the most valuable and incredible experience of my life. I have learned so much from each one of you, and I am incredibly grateful for the guidance and mentorship that you provided me during my placement. Your kindness and patience helped me to build my confidence and hone my skills, and for that, I am forever thankful.

The experience made me understand how the world would be so beautiful if everyone gets treated equally with all respect from others. The practical skills that I learned from the team, coupled with the valuable lessons for me to embrace quality skills in our life, have been incredibly beneficial to me. I am grateful for every moment that I spent working alongside you all, and I will cherish those memories forever.

Words can't describe how thankful I am to know you all. You all made me feel like I am a part of the family in Australia, and I have never felt this before. I must confess that I love you all! I wish all the best to you and to everyone.

I would love to pay a visit anytime soon.

Warm Regards,



Hornsby Winter appeal warms the heart

It's just fabulous! I'm still excited – it was the best Winter Appeal ever! I had 54 wonderful young ladies from Loreto girls' school on different shifts on the two days of a June weekend. Each one of them was so impressive and could not do enough for us.

The youth group from Waitara were there helping me on both days. I explained the jobs that needed to be done and then stood back and watched how well they all worked together.

Time and time again I see how young people have their own ways of managing things and meeting the challenge if they are left to work things out themselves. There were no disagreements between them and they were just as excited as I was when the donations started coming in.



This Winter Appeal we received support from Waitara/Normanhurst parishes, St Leo's school, Our Lady of the Rosary school, Loreto and the doctors and nurses from Hornsby accident and emergency department.

The two community days Jodie Davidson and I ran have really connected us with different community groups. Lifeline are prepared to work with us when they set up their face-to-face counselling, we have a lady from Centrelink who will come and help us with clients who are struggling with forms and navigating the system. It is so great to explore the ways we can engage with the community. We have been able to really showcase Vinnies in a very positive way in our local area. Some people were surprised to know we had a welfare section above the shop.

Thanks to everyone who has given so generously their time and donations to the Winter Appeal. It warms the heart.

Shirley Kelynack

CONGRATULATIONS NIDA!

Thursday 28 September 2023 saw the annual NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards take place at Gosford RSL. It was hosted and run by The Centre of Volunteering. Retail Area Manager Matthew Ferrier, Cluster Retail Manager Tash Payne and I were all in attendance to support our volunteers within the Vinnies Support Centre, Retail and Warehouse Sectors across the Central Coast and beyond.

This year, I nominated Wyong VSC Volunteer Nida Newman. Nida was previously volunteering for many years within the Vinnies Wyong Retail Sector and over 18 months ago, in April 2022, Nida transferred her volunteering to the Wyong Support Centre, where she still volunteers today.

Within the 18 months Nida has been volunteering on my team at Wyong VSC, she has displayed a fantastic work ethic, connecting to the community, working as a team player, supporting people in need and following the St Vincent de Paul procedures. As her VSC coordinator, I feel grateful to have Nida on my team.

Bradley Dingle, Vinnies Support Centre Coordinator, Wyong



Adam Crouch, MP presents Nominee Award to Wyong VSC Volunteer Nida Newman



SCHOOL AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Busking for Vinnies 2023

Music in the Mall has returned to Parramatta Centenary Square in support of the St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Appeal. It has been a delight to have 4 schools volunteering to perform in the heart of Parramatta on 17 August.

Students sang and danced among the bustle of the Parramatta Farmers Market, office-workers passing through during lunch, and also for the entertainment for marginalised members of the community residing in the square.

With the rising cost of living of challenges, Vinnies volunteers held a community outreach stall next to the performing students to provide referrals to the Harris Park Support Centre, information about the Parramatta Vinnies Van, and the Vinnies Assist hotline (13 18 12).

The annual Busking for Vinnies event started with a number of students from Our Lady of Mercy College (Parramatta) in the 1990s, and the Vinnies Western Sydney Winter Appeal doorknock.

We are once again grateful to Our Lady of Mercy College (Parramatta), Mount Saint Benedict College (Pennant Hills), Oakhill College (Castle Hill) for the ongoing involvement with Busking for Vinnies, and also welcomed St Edmund's College (Wahroonga) in joining us for their first year.

Busking for Vinnies 2023 has raised around \$5400 for people experiencing homelessness and hardship in Greater Western Sydney Central Council. Thank you to the contributions of Parramatta City Council, Vinnies Metropolitan Schools & Youth Team, Winston Hills Conference, and volunteer coordinator John Neylan for another resounding year of Busking for Vinnies.



L-R: Kerry Bailey (Mount Saint Benedict College), John Neylan (Coordinator), Roydon Ng (Vinnies Schools & Youth Team), Paul Lenton (founder of Busking for Vinnies, former teacher at Our Lady of Mercy College).

School Social Justice Workshops



The Vinnies School Engagement Officers have been busy visiting many schools to facilitate our Vinnies Social Justice Workshops and strengthen our connections with the schools.

Our workshops are designed to facilitate meaningful engagement in social justice issues and to provide opportunities for participants to put their faith into action. Workshops are targeted to all members of the school community - primary or secondary school students, teachers, staff and parents.



We deliver Social Justice Workshops on the following topics; Homelessness, Poverty & Cost of Living, Human Dignity, Migrants & Refugees and Recycling & Sustainability. All workshops include an introduction to the St Vincent de Paul Society, hands on activities to support Vinnies Conferences and Services and ways to provide ongoing support to the Society.



Vinnies at SHINE for Broken Bay Catholic Schools

Vinnies Metro Youth & Schools Engagement team attended SHINE Conference 2023, at St Peter's Catholic College, Tuggerah. The event aims to assist students in their faith development and explore servant

leadership in their lives to inspire them to become actively involved in their faith and the community.

Vinnies delivered two Vinnies Social Justice/Faith into Action workshops and spoke with students and teachers from high schools across Broken Bay Diocese.



Vinnies Young Adult Sleepouts



Australian Catholic University held their first Winter Sleepout this year and what an amazing group of young people!

They had marshmallows by the bonfire, played games, and did trivia based on statistics of those sleeping rough in Australia.

They smashed their goal of raising \$500, and are currently standing at over \$800 with more donations coming in each day. Well done guys!

Members and students from The University of New South Wales, The University of Notre Dame, The University of Technology Sydney and The University of Sydney all came together to brave the cold and sleep rough for their 2023 Vinnies Sleepout. They raised over \$4,300 in donations! A great effort!



School and Youth Engagement articles supplied by Roydon Ng and Kate Conroy, Metro Schools Engagement Officers

Mini Vinnies Gathering 2023

The annual gathering of Mini Vinnies from Metropolitan Region was a huge success this year, according to Schools Engagement Officer Kate Conroy and Roydon Ng.

The Mini Vinnies Gathering is an encouraging opportunity to bring together the passion and enthusiasm of our youngest members across Sydney, Broken Bay, and Greater Western Sydney Central Council.

Students received both spiritual and social justice formation on the theme of choosing to be a helper. Interactive workshops for Vinnies Vans, Vinnies Support Centres, Disability/Inclusion, and Recycling/Sustainability encourage the Mini Vinnies to act upon Catholic Social Teaching in their school communities and beyond.

Many students asked questions about how they could make a difference in choosing to be a helper. Such remarks showed incredible insight about issues such as homelessness and poverty, and ultimately encouraged their peers to also take action.



“Great to see various Vinnies Services coming together and our school communities made aware of how Vinnies assists,” says Roydon.

“The students received in depth learnings that Vinnies is much more than retail stores or Vinnies Vans.

“It is our hope that school communities not just the attending students will be blessed through participating in Mini Vinnies”.

Conference members from across the Central Councils were also invited to support and encourage the students. Feedback from the day included the students and teachers being excited about young people following through their commitment to social justice well into their adulthood.

Mini Vinnies empowers primary school students to become advocates by putting Vinnies Values and their faith into action. It is a group of young people who get together to organise and talk about helping others in need within their school, local community and beyond.

We are grateful to The Australian Catholic University, Strathfield for providing us with use of the facilities.





Some Snippets of God's Blessings on Me

Huang Zhi-Wei (aka Reg Wong), Forestville Conference

Every Friday I wheel a blind lady to the chapel of a local nursing home. It's her only weekly activity that is not confined to her tiny room. For that she is embarrassingly grateful but, unbeknown to her, she is actually doing me a favour – it allows me to carry out my ministry, albeit a small one.

At the ecumenical chapel service the Pastor invariably calls the assembly to prayer by intoning "God is good" to which the congregation reflexively replies with "All the time". He then chants "All the time" to which the congregation reciprocates with "God is good". This oft-repeated ritual is now indelibly entrenched in my mind as a constant reminder of its truism.

It was Holy Thursday. Every student of the De La Salle boarding school in Katoomba had already departed for their homes by noon. Still lingering on the school quadrangle at four o'clock that afternoon was an overseas student who knew no one and didn't have the wherewithal to go anywhere for the Easter holidays. Although resigned to what fate awaited him, he needn't have worried: a WWII Lithuanian refugee family came to his rescue and took him home for the four-day Easter holiday.

I was that overseas student.

A large city like Sydney is a lonely and depressing place for a foreign student who is identifiably different and linguistically-challenged, penniless, and homeless. Necessity being the mother of invention, he knocked on the door of Benildus House, a St Vincent de Paul hostel for homeless boys in Neutral Bay. He must have looked pitiful and pitiable because the matron was sufficiently moved to give him accommodation in exchange for some housework.

I was that foreign student.

When the prime site of the hostel was sold for high-rise development, all the boys were given six weeks to find alternative accommodation. At the sixth week, I still hadn't found anything affordable.

My advertised-offer in the Saturday SMH "to do any odd job in exchange for bed and breakfast" attracted seven replies, one of which was from the late Monsignor John Byrne, PP of St Joseph's in Newtown who, after warning me to be cautious about predators, offered me a room at the rear of

the presbytery until I could stand on my feet. In a twinkling of an eye my accommodation needs no longer presented a problem.

During my three months at the presbytery, I acted like a de facto curate – taking phone calls when the priests were having their after-lunch siestas, occasionally giving dispensation to eat meat on Fridays, writing out the odd baptismal certificate and helping count the Sunday offering.

Unfortunately for me, the house-keeper developed a palpable dislike for me. I was to learn later that her submariner brother was a victim of a torpedo attack launched from a Japanese warship. As I was indistinguishable from the enemy, it provided her understandable reasons to detest me. Backed into the proverbial corner, I decided it was best to leave the comfort of the presbytery – but where to?

I didn't even have the funds to pay for my tuition fees at the University of NSW where I was studying Applied Chemistry. Desperate, I applied for a laboratory assistant's position at the-now defunct Australian Glass Manufacturers. Not only did they give me the job but decided to groom me for appointment post graduation to one of their subsidiaries in either Malaysia or Singapore. As an incentive for me to accept their proposition, they offered to pay all my university tuition fees and reimburse me for all expenditures on text books. In that one instant all traces of my penury evaporated.

Doesn't the above confirm that "God is faithful ... and when you are put to the test, He will give you the strength to endure it and provide you with a way out." (1 Corinthians 10:13) Am I not the living proof of this goodness of God?

My blessings are not just temporal but also extend into the spiritual. Although dragged up in a Taoist temple in a predominantly Islamic country, I embraced the Holy Catholic Apostolic Faith straight after I left high school. It's not of my own doing for Christ did say, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." (John 6:44).

Yes, God is good ... All the time.



Spiritual Reflection - Take Up Your Cross!

Corinne Lindsell, Mission & Formation Partner Metro

I am sure that many of us have heard the phrase “take up your cross” or “this is the cross I must bear”. This is a powerful and heartbreaking sentence to say. It is one that brings with it a deep sense of pain. It is also one that invites us into an opportunity.

Spiritual mystics in the Catholic faith like Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross even talk about this invitation. We can delve into an opportunity of redeeming suffering, that whatever it is we are going through could have a redeeming function to it. It must be for some good.

I remember a number of years ago suffering from a chronic illness where I had chronic pain and chronic fatigue. I hated it. I knew I had to endure it, and I questioned “is this my cross?” I took this as an opportunity to offer up my pain as a prayer for those in my life. It turned a very dark time into a moment of connection with God and a way to think and pray for others. I don’t know if this is what St Paul meant by “present your

bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” but I definitely didn’t want to waste that pain in my own woes.

This was a time that I could have easily prayed for a miracle of good health (which I was praying for as well) but I turned it into a deeper act of faith and it allowed me to gain more in my knowledge that God is God – not a magician.

When we look at the life of Jesus, He was never disconnected with the mind, body and spirit. He knew and taught that faith is not just a lofty idea, or an intellectual exercise, it is one that is lived, one that is felt (physically and emotionally), and one that is ever evolving and growing.

Each time we are confronted with a cross that we may have to bear, can we honestly look at it as an opportunity to being “transformed by the renewing of our minds” as mentioned in the first reading from Jeremiah?

What about when we are confronted with the crosses of those around us? Especially those who we are supporting in the Society? How do we allow for our compassion to be with them in the crosses they bear?

Reflective Question: What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “take up your cross”?



Image: Ken Duncan – Memory Mountain, Northern Territory

Chatswood Spring Fair

On Saturday 2 September, members attended the Spring Fair to bring the presence of Vinnies to the Chatswood community. The day was highly successful in that many members of the community approached the stall.

Chatswood Parish had three stalls set up, and we were kindly invited into one of these, which also included information about Catholic Care and the Chatswood Parish (including someone from Legion of Mary taking petitions, and a mentor from Lifestyle English Conversation). How lucky we were to be in this stall. A popular feature and giveaway from this stall included jars of holy water! It was a point of conversation, and many questioned whether it was “free” to take home and where it had come from.

Lucky for us, Bruce was nearby with a Vinnies bucket collecting donations should anyone wish to contribute. The Vinnies fridge magnets and all the different prayer cards and bookmarks from the three organisations were also a huge hit.

Special thanks to Teresa Ng for leading this set up with Chatswood Parish and filling in any gaps during the day, John Ferguson for coming all the way out and bringing all the giveaways and information, Bruce Heilbut for collecting donations and staying for a while, Dan Wong for his presence and attempts to recruit male singers into the Parish and all supporters!

I know many of our members were also helping out at the Bunnings BBQ on this day and Sunday too. Fortunately Barry Finch survived this grueling weekend of fundraising!

I will leave you with one story I gained on the day: I saw a lady collecting prayer cards from the stall and I approached her for a conversation. She gladly took a couple of jars of holy water. I asked her if she knew anything about Vinnies and she replied with a smile, “Yes, I know Vinnies. My son was in jail and they were the only people who helped him! He is doing OK now”.

El Herlianto, President, Forestville Our Lady of Good Counsel Conference





France, April 23rd, 1833. A group of young university students, faced with social inequalities and injustices, decided to take action in the hope of changing the world.

To this end, the group of friends who wish to share their faith and translate it into action found the first "Conference of Charity

Prayer, friendship and action come together to visit the Mouffetard district, one of the poorest of Paris. It was a Daughter of Charity, Sister Rosalie Rendu, who accompanied and guided them, instructing them in the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul.

In 1834, the Conferences took the saint as their patron saint and

dedicated themselves to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. The following year the first Regulations were published and in 1839 the International General Council was constituted.

Today, we have 800,000 members who participate in 48,000 Conferences in 153 territories (and growing), helping 30 million people a year. The Council General International, inspired by the legacy of our seven founders, congratulates all our members around the world on the 190th anniversary of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

**Council General International, Society of St Vincent de Paul
23 April 2023**

THANK YOU!

When our Northern Beaches Regional President, Mick O'Farrell, suggested a visit to our Davidson Conference in June we didn't realise he had a hidden agenda!

As Vincentians we don't seek any thanks or rewards for the work we do. We aim to live out the Gospel message without any fanfare.

Imagine our surprise when Mick produced some "Lifetime Service Certificates" and medals for three members for their years of service to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

We have all been Vincentians for many years and have received more from the people we have been privileged to visit and serve, than we have given.

Our lives have been shaped in such positive ways and as Vincentians we have become better people hopefully treating those we strive to serve with compassion, respect and dignity.



It is with humility that we accept and thank you for our Awards.

Our night was completed with dinner at the Smiths where we were joined by Trish (Mick's wife) Jo (Sam's wife) and our priests, Fr Satheesh and Fr Joseph. A great fun night!!

Thank you,

Doris VanderStraaten, Tony & Carmel Smith





Northern Beaches Festival Mass

Our Festival Mass was held at St Keiran's parish, Manly Vale, on Thursday 5 October.

It was well attended and enjoyed by all who came along to give thanks and renew our calling to serve the poor through our good works as members of the Society.

The mass was a beautiful and uplifting experience. We had four priests concelebrating, with Fr Jo Jo presiding.

The four-piece choir were amazing.

My special thanks to Catherine O'Donnell and Lea Joris for all their hard work in organizing the Mass and supper.

During the Mass two new conference presidents were inducted – Catherine O'Donnell of Manly Vale and Dr Greg Elliott of Avalon.

It was my great privilege to present 15 lifetime membership awards to members with more than 20 years of service to the Society. Together, that's a total of over 400 hundred years of experience and commitment! They also received a gift of an engraved pen as a memento of the occasion.

The recipients were Bruce Whittet, Rex Harding, Bart Snel, Steve Hills, Ron De Fina, Sam Fiore, Michael Rutledge, Pat Cooper, Judy Kelly, Ann Christopher, John Donnelly, Margaret Colman, Tom Colman, John Colby and Mick O'Farrell.



Ashvini Ambihaipahar, our Metro Regional Director, kindly presented the awards. My thanks to Ash for coming along to the Mass.

Bruce Whittet was also presented with a Papal Blessing by Fr Jo Jo on the occasion of his 80th birthday and his work in Vinnies.



I would like to thank all the Vincentians of our Northern Beaches region for their commitment and service to the needy families we assist.

Yours in Fredric and St Vincent.

Mick O'Farrell, Northern Beaches Regional President





Chatswood Commissioning Mass

Members and friends of the Chatswood Region of the Society of St Vincent de Paul gathered for a Commissioning Mass with the broader Catholic Community of our Lady of Dolours Parish on Saturday 7 October.

Parish Priest Fr David Ranson presided at Mass and welcomed Society members - recognising their ministry of service as essential to the life of the parish and broader community.

Central Council President Michelle Chahine welcomed new members and candidates and spoke to the congregation of the Vincentian ministry.

“The role of our members is a serious and dedicated one. They must look outwards with vision to those who are less fortunate and to the wider society, the Church and the world in which our humble organisation lives and grows.

“The St Vincent de Paul Society members are ministers of love and service, done in the name and for the love of Jesus. They live the Gospel serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.”

Chatswood Regional President Barry Finch called the candidates and invited them to the steps of the altar.

New members include: Youth Conference members Helena Cullis (President), Clara De Asis, Frances De Asis,



Aaron Espiritu, Maria Ferraris, Clara Ho, Adeline Kassis, Amanda Kassis and Naomi Massa.

New Chatswood and Forestville Adult Conference members include: Teresa Ng, Nicholas Everett, John Formosa, Roberto Perez and Winston Theseira.

The new members were welcomed by the Society members and parish community and we renewed our commitment and joined in the celebration of the Eucharist.

After Mass, the community gathered on the forecourt for refreshments and a sausage sizzle.

A special thanks to youth member Sean Dixon, the wonderful youth members and generous parishioners including Gillian Hawkins who helped to set up and run the BBQ and served refreshments.





PIERRE EMMANUEL FÉLIX CLAVÉ

One of the 7 Founders of St Vincent de Paul Society
Born 8 July 1811, died 9 November 1853



Félix Clavé is one of the seven Founders of St Vincent de Paul Society and the least known of all.

Pierre Emmanuel Félix Clavé was born on 8 July 1811 at Tarbes in the Hautes-Pyrenees, Southern France, 8 kilometers distance from Lourdes, a town that was still insignificant at the time. Guillaume Clavé was his father. From Félix letters we know that he had a brother and two sisters, the younger of the girls was Petronille. We don't know the names of the other siblings and the mother.

In May 1830, the Clavé family moved to Paris and settled in the suburb of St. Philippe du Roule. Félix was 19 years old. In Paris he went to university and graduated in literary studies. At the end of his studies he was employed as correspondent for "La Revue de Deux Mondes".

Félix was a Catholic, but during his studies at the university, he joined a movement which was popular at that time, the "Saint Simonians" which was a sort of socialist and anti-Catholic movement.

At the university, Félix Clavé had the chance to encounter Frederic Ozanam, who was animated by strong faith. The encounter evolved into a friendship.

Ozanam helped the friend Clavé to return to Catholicism and soon

Félix joined the "Conference of History" run by Frederic Ozanam and Emmanuel Bailly.

It was together with Félix Clavé that the group of young men of 18 Rue du Petit Bourbon Saint Sulpice, decided to change the name and the scope of the "Conference of History" and call it "The Conference of Charity". The first meeting took place at 8 o'clock in the evening on 23 April 1833. The people present were: Emmanuel Bailly, Paul Lamache, Félix Clavé, Auguste le Taillandier, Jules Devaux, François Lallier and Frederic Ozanam.

At the meetings the members prayed for the poor, for benefactors and all were placed under the patronage of St

Vincent de Paul. Jules Devaux, a student in medicine, was elected Treasurer of the group. The only revenues they got were the personal collection of the members made at the meetings.

The young volunteers yet felt the need for advice and guidance to get in touch with the poor. They dispatched Jules Devaux and Félix Clavé to Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Sister of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, well known in Paris. The nun welcomed the young men with kindness, she encouraged the society members, gave them invaluable advice, and a list of poor families to visit providing them with bread and meat tickets.

At the first anniversary of St Sulpice Conference's foundation, the number of adherents counted 100 units. It was necessary to create a second Conference at St Etienne du Mont.

Félix Clavé is one of the honourable seven Founders of the St Vincent de Paul Society. We all should be proud of him and thankful for what he has done for the Society.

In 1835 a call came to form a third Conference. President Emmanuel Bailly, with no hesitation, choose Félix Clavé to lead the new foundation. The New Conference was created in the Parisian suburb St. Philippe du Roule, where Félix resided, and took the name of Conference St Philippe du Roule.

In October 1836, Clavé was sent to Algiers as a correspondent for "La Revue des Deux Mondes". Three years later Frederic Ozanam announced with joy in the letter dated 9 July 1839 that also in Algiers there was a Vincentian Conference. Clavé was the Founder of the Society in Algeria.

Early in 1840 Clavé returned to France and two months later he and his family left for Mexico. In 1845 Clavé did establish the first Vincentian Conference in Mexico.

In 1846 Clavé was sent to Rome by "La Revue des Deux Mondes" as a reporter for the election of the new Pope,

Article continues on page 20



Pius IX. Félix has written an interesting book on the personality of Pius IX.

On 11 February 1847, Félix married Marie Louise Sorg at Notre Dame de Lorette Church in Paris. They had no children. The 36 years old Clavé had then only 6 years to live. He was tormented by the tragic events two of his friends, Marie de Nicolai Leautaud and Marie Cappelle Lafarge, while he was in Algeria.

Marie Cappelle Lafarge was convicted for robbery and for murder. During the process Marie Cappelle Lafarge tried to deflect the attention of the prosecutor mentioning the young Félix Clavé. To see the name of his family associated with the

criminal case, marred Félix life and his health declined quickly. Clavé couple moved then to the South of France, and settled in the city of Pau. There Félix died on 9 November 1853, 2 months after Frederic Ozanam death. Ozanam was 40 years old, Félix Clavé was 42 years old.

Félix Clavé was portrayed as being the most delicate man of France, a noble and conscientious man with an absolute devotion to religion. Félix Clavé is one of the honourable seven Founders of St Vincent de Paul Society. We all should be proud of him and thankful for what he has done for the Society.

Bruno Spedalieri, Vice President, Forestville Conference

Freedom Feast 2023 – Chatswood Our Lady of Dolours Parish

Our Community Feast to raise funds for refugees on Saturday 3 June was a great success. Not only did it raise \$4333 for the Jesuit Refugee Service and the House of Welcome, but it was also a lot of fun.

Congratulations to the team from Vinnies which, in generous fashion, turned up in full force and carried off the winning prize for their knowledge of the global refugee situation, such as: *Which country hosts the most refugees? (Turkey); What percentage of Syrians went to bed hungry at night in 2022 according to the United Nations? (90%); Why do Samoans fear they will have to leave their deeply loved islands and become refugees? (Because of rising sea levels.)*



Huge thanks to the wonderful chefs from the parish and community who provided mouth-watering dishes from Afghanistan, South America, Persia and Fiji. Thanks also to Mr Ryan Balboa and the band of students of Pius College who decorated the hall on Saturday morning and acted as ushers on the night and also to Emily and Isabella Clarke. Our MC and auctioneer was the irrepressible Marty Thomas rising from his COVID sickbed.

Our Community Action team who pulled off the event

included Ditas Naguit, Cynthia Martin, Olivia Lee, Gillian Hawkins, Virginia Lagos and Leiola Davoren.

A generous part of the financial success of the night was due to some very giving guests who responded to the charisma of auctioneer Marty Thomas and auctioneer's assistant Fr David Ranson. We are deeply grateful to those who reached deep into their pockets, not for the sake of the items on which

they bid, but for the children and families whose lives have been torn apart by war, persecution or civil breakdown.

We were reminded of the level of need in the refugee world by Holla David, the delightful School Education Office for the Jesuit Refugee Service, who was our guest speaker.

Holla outlined the work of the JRS and very warmly thanked the parish for the support that we have provided in the past through both through fund-raisers like the Freedom Feast and through our annual food-drive.

"There are so many other things you could be doing on a Saturday night," she said. "Instead you are here supporting refugees." "Not at all," a guest responded. "It's the best Saturday night I have had for ages!"

Jo Karaolis, Community Action – Chatswood Catholic Parish



SVdP National President of Kiribati visits Sydney

On 20 June 2023, Brother Rabaere (Raphael) Rikari, National President of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in the Archipelago of Kiribati was in Sydney. Rabaere was returning from Rome where, on 13 June, he participated in the General Assembly for the election of the new Vincentian President General (the 17th) of the International Confederation, the Spaniard Juan Manuel Buergo Gomez. He replaces the Brazilian Renato Lima de Oliveira. The new President was installed in September on the feast of Frederic Ozanam in Paris.

Rabaere Rikari's day on 20 June with Forestville conference members began with meeting Bruno Spedalieri, NSW Projects Officer, and El Herlianto, Broken Bay Central Council Twinning officer and President of Forestville Conference. Together we embarked on a tour of Matthew Talbot Hostel and the Ozanam Learning Centre in Woolloomooloo. We are grateful to the Manager Cherie McKenna, and to our guide at Matthew Talbot, Clayton Riley.

Then Rabaere met with Michelle Chahine, President of Broken Bay Central Council, Barry Finch, President of Chatswood Region, and other Forestville conference members over lunch.

After lunch, Rabaere was taken for a tour of the One Meal Complex in Brookvale. For this, we are grateful to the One Meal Northern Beaches Manager, Kim Williams.

We have learnt a lot about Kiribati. Once called Gilbert and Ellis Islands, the two groups of Islands separated in 1976 when they were still under the protectorate of Great Britain. In 1978, the Ellis Islands became independent – taking the name of the Republic of Tuvalu. The Gilbert Islands, on 12 July 1979, became the Republic of Kiribati. Kiribati comprises 3 archipelagos: Kiribati, Phoenix and Line Islands.

Kiribati is the Nation of the First Sun. In fact it is the first place in the world to see the sun of the new day. Kiribati is the poorest country in the Pacific, its only resources are coconuts and fish. There are no cows and no sheep in Kiribati, the only domestic animals used for food are hens and pigs.



There is no University in Kiribati and the students need to go to Fiji if they intend to do university studies.

The currency used in the Republic is the Australian dollar. The land surface of the 33 islands of the Republic is as vast as the city of New York, but the ocean extension on which the islands sit is as vast as all of USA. The population of Kiribati is 120,000, with most living in Tarawa, the Capital of the nation.

Tarawa sits on an atoll (a coral island) within the Republic of Kiribati consisting of 32 atoll islands and one only volcanic island which is uninhabited because of the toxins produced by the phosphate mines. The maximum elevation of the atolls from the sea level is three meters and the scientists say that by the year 2100 all Kiribati islands will be submerged by the rising ocean. The present government is buying lands in the Republic of Fiji and encourages the Kiribati people to move to Fiji or to other more secure nations of the Pacific.

In the Republic of Kiribati only 20 islands out of 33 are inhabited. In the Line Archipelago only one atoll is inhabited. 95% of the population is Christian and 58% are Catholic.

Fr. Martin Everi MSC is the Parish Priest of the parish of St Joseph, Bikenibeu, Tarawa, Kiribati. This is the only parish in Tarawa and all Kiribati. The parish is divided in 20 sectors or communities. In October 2021, the new Bishop of the nation, Monsignor Koru Tito, was elected and consecrated.

The Saint Vincent de Paul Society is present in Kiribati with a National Council and 9 active Conferences. One of the Parish sector is called: St Vincent de Paul, Gasgony community.

We have suggested to Rabaere that he provides us with a list of poor children that can be assisted from Australia with the *Assist A Student* program. We have also suggested that the Kiribati Conferences submit applications to finance small projects such as rearing pigs.

Bruno Spedalieri, NSW Projects Officer, V.P Forestville Conference



Please ASSIST A STUDENT

The *Assist A Student* program gives you the opportunity to provide funding to support the education of a student in one of our partner countries for one year.

In many Asia Pacific countries, poverty excludes individuals from reaching their full potential by being a barrier to opportunities, including accessing education.

Your donation of \$100 or more will make all the difference for a primary, secondary or tertiary student in one of our partner countries.

Think of the great opportunities that you or you Conference can make in bringing education into the reach of young people around the world.



Naw* is 22 years old and lives with her Aunt while attending West Yangon University in Myanmar.

She is studying Translation and Interpretation, as well as Burmese, Short Stories, Poetry and Drama, English and Communication Skills.

Naw knows that an education will help her “earn money and I, too, will support others”.



Andre* is in 3rd grade and lives in Indonesia with his family.

He likes playing football and wants to become a policeman one day. He likes helping his parents and goes to Sunday School.

Andre says “thank you and God Bless all the people who have helped me.”

Nur* is in Year 12 and studies at a Vocational High School in Bandung, Indonesia. She lives with her mother who has recently lost her job.

Nur says that the support “helps her mother to worry less about fees”. Nur wants to be a Tour Director and travel around the world. She thanks all donors to the *Assist A Student* program who help young people to achieve their goals.



**all names have been changed*

- I am an individual assisting a student; OR
 I am assisting a student on behalf of a group

NAME (group or individual): _____

CONTACT NAME (for group): _____

TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

SUBURB: _____

STATE: _____ POSTCODE: _____

EMAIL: _____

I would like to donate (Donations over \$2 are tax deductible):

\$100 \$200 \$300 OR \$ _____

I would like to receive a certificate for this donation.

Thank you for your support.

Payment method:

Debit my credit card (details below)

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Mastercard Visa Card Expiry: __ / __

NAME ON CARD: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Cheque, payable to ‘St Vincent de Paul Society’

Please complete your details and send to:
 Assist A Student Program,
 St Vincent de Paul Sate Council Office
 PO Box 5
 PETERSHAM, NSW 2049

DOING GOOD TOGETHER

makes a difference



*Be part of our social and affordable housing
POD project, a partnership for good*

Conference led community development

Amélie Housing seeks partners willing to support delivery of the NSW Social and Affordable Housing (SAHF) program. The program requires collaboration between the various arms of the Society to support safe engaged communities in Society owned housing developments.

Our SAHF promise requires we fully utilise Amélie Housing staff, SVDP Support Services including Tailored Support and local Conferences to enhance the housing tenants' lived experience. (Strategic Directions 2015-22)

Experience has shown that safe engaged neighbourhoods require broad community involvement and our Conferences can spearhead locally relevant engagement activities. This collaboration is the Point of Difference our wider network can offer those suffering housing stress. You are invited to be part of the POD Project. This could be an activity for new and experienced members.

Amélie Housing, with local Conference members, are conducting discussions to explore this unique collaboration. The POD projects sets us apart from other community housing providers. Share your thoughts and explore how we can formalise this vital point of difference.

The POD Project is a positive opportunity designed to provide companionship to our tenants. This is how we build safe engaged communities.

Want to know more?
Contact: POD@amelie.org.au

Member Support for Compliance

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is a committed registered child-safe organisation. So that we can meet this commitment, we have developed support for Members. The following compliances are required for Members, volunteers, and employees:

- NSW Working With Children Check (every 5 years)
- Police Check (every 3 years)
- Vinnies NSW Child Safe Familiarisation Training (every 2 years).

Need assistance applying for your online Police Check?

Membership and Community Engagement staff across Metro Region attend some Vinnies Support Centres (VSCs) to assist Members apply for their online Police Checks. Thank you to the VSC Coordinators for opening their doors for to all Members who have taken up the offer so far.

Vinnies Support Centre Coordinators are also able to assist.

Members can simply RSVP to MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au with name, time preferences, Conference for completing checks.

Applying for Background Checks

- Instruction documents are available – just ask your Conference President or Member & Community Engagement Coordinator (MCEC) at MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au.

Online Police Check

- Go to: <https://svdpmetroregion.nationalcrimecheck.com.au/>
- You'll be asked to enter a Site Code which is 'Broken Bay'
- Results go to Vinnies. Once applied, advise your Membership and Community Engagement Coordinator.
- Your clearance number and expiry date will be added to your Society records.

Working With Children's Check (WWCC)

- Go to <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/>
- Once a new or renewed WWC is received: Results go to you. Advise your President and MCEC of: WWCC number, expiry date and confirm your DOB.
- We use these details to verify and register you with The Office of Children's Guardian as a volunteer.
- Your WWCC clearance number and expiry date will be added to your Society records.

Vinnies NSW Child Safe Familiarisation Training

Online- Vinnies Learning Centre: Instructions are available. Log in to your account: <https://vinnieslearningcentre.litmos.com.au/account/Login>

Extra Support for Members:

Available for Members has been Face-to-Face training

These have been offered to Regional Councils and most have held sessions, some still to come and some yet to be set- Presidents are kept updated and offered opportunities for Members.

We need 10 members registering per face-to-face session to ensure it can go ahead.

Zoom sessions

As used previously during COVID, these Zoom sessions are becoming a popular way to complete Child Safe familiarisation Training. Sessions are being run regularly each week. Each session runs for 1.5 hours.

Contact your friendly MCEC Team at MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au and we'll assist you in registering and attending a session of your choice.

We're always happy to be of service!



CUSTOMISED VINNIES FUNDRAISING PAGES FOR CONFERENCES

When using our Community
Fundraising Portal, you can:

- Update and personalise your page at any time
- Share your personalised URL or QR code for quick and easy online donations
- No cash handling required by your conference and all donors will receive a receipt automatically via email
- Saves you time and paperwork

Please see here for other conference pages:

fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au

If your Conference is interested in having a customised page or just want to have a chat about fundraising, please don't hesitate to reach out to Caroline on caroline.casse@vinnies.org.au.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works



Vinnies NO INTEREST LOANS

**A safe way to borrow.
An affordable alternative to credit.**

Borrow up to \$2000 for essential goods and services. Repay only what you borrow over a term that suits you*.

*limits apply

**NO FEES
NO CHARGES
no worries!**



What is NILs?

No Interest Loans (NILs) provide individuals and families on low incomes with access to safe, fair, affordable credit with no fees or charges – ever.

Am I eligible?

- ✓ I hold a Health Care Card / Pension Card OR earn less than \$70,000 before tax (\$100,000 for couples or people with dependants)
- ✓ I have lived at my current or previous address for at least 3 months*
 - *exceptions can apply
- ✓ I can show that I can afford to repay the loan

What can I use NILs for?

Loans are available up to \$2000 for essential goods and services including:

- Household Items
- Car Repairs & Registration
- Medical & Dental
- Technology
- Furniture
- Education

Loans are not available for:

Bills, cash, debts, food, fines or penalties



Call : **1800 484 664**

Email: nils@vinnies.org.au

Visit: vinnies.org.au/NILS





Vinnies Assist—13 18 12

WHAT IS VINNIES ASSIST?

Vinnies Assist provides information, referral pathways and resources that can be accessed by, our Members, Conferences, Volunteers, Staff and external stakeholders to obtain up to date information from across all the Society's 7 Directorates:

Office of the CEO, Vinnies Services, Finance, Membership, Volunteers and Regional Operations, Corporate Services, Commercial Operations, Fundraising and Communications.



WHAT WE CAN PROVIDE:

Vinnies Assist aims to bridge the gap for members, volunteers, staff and the general public requiring up to date information, guidance and support to assist the People we Assist:

- Telephone support to meet immediate needs
- Access to crisis and short-term accommodation
- Immediate referral services to our Welfare services
- Support to access Vinnies Services across NSW
 - Homelessness & Housing
 - Disability & Inclusion Services
 - Health Services
- Support in accessing external services

The Vinnies Assist operational hours 8.30am - 4.30pm

ACCESSING INFORMATION OR REFERRAL SERVICES

can be made by contacting **13 18 12** pressing **option 5**, emailing vinnies@vinnies.org.au for general information or to make a referral to our Vinnies Services or Member support services — intake.officer@vinnies.org.au.

Member and Volunteer Recognition of Service

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW acknowledges the great contribution members and volunteers make to the work of the organisation and the people it serves.

It has a Member and Volunteer Recognition of Service (Badges and Certificates) procedure to recognise members and volunteers who have provided 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60 or 65 years of service to the Society.

The five-yearly anniversary badges and certificates were introduced by State Council in 2021.

Central Council, Regional Council and Conference Presidents, supported by staff in regions, may also like to hold local events such as morning teas; arrange for special mentions at Mass; or organise a card and gift for members reaching significant milestones in their service.

2023/24—Key Social Justice dates

These social Justice days through 2023/24 provide a great opportunity to promote Vinnies awareness in your local community and to highlight both the good works and the policy advocacy of the Society.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 19 November 2023: World Day of the Poor | 20 February: World Day of Social Justice |
| 5 December: International Volunteer Day | 21 March: National Harmony Day |
| 10 December: Human Rights Day | 24 March: Palm Sunday March |
| 1 January 2024: World Day of Peace | 26 May: Sorry Day |
| 26 January: Australia Day/ Survival Day | 27 May - 3 June: National Reconciliation Week |
| 8 February: World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against Human Trafficking | 16 - 22 June: Refugee Week |
| 13 February: Anniversary of the Apology | 7 - 14 July: NAIDOC Week |
| | 5 - 11 August: Homelessness Week |
| | 25 August: Social Justice Sunday |
| | 1 September: World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation |

For suggested content to be added to your Parish bulletins, to talk at parish Masses, to run recruitment drives, and for ideas for your Conferences, please refer to the MAVS social justice page: <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/social-justice/>



Community Connections – does this interest your Conference?

Is your Conference looking for ways to engage with your community, promote the Vinnies brand and let people know what your Conference is about?

We have various options available to Conferences, all with support from your Member and Community Engagement team. Consider the following:

Vinnies Market Stalls

If you have a local market that is regularly held, then a Vinnies stall may be just the thing needed to let your local community know about the various works of Vinnies.

Contact MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au and we can liaise with the Market Organisers to arrange a date for the Vinnies stall to be held. We can provide flyers, merchandise, tables, tablecloths and a Vinnies marquee. We will assist with setup and pack down on the day. All you need to do is ensure a few Members (at least 2 at all times) are available for the duration of the markets to talk to the community about the good works that our wonderful Members and Services provide.

Shopping Centre tables

One way for the community to get involved with Vinnies as well as learn about the works that Vinnies do, is through shopping centre tables. If your local Shopping Centre looks like a great location to host a Vinnies table for a day, please let your Member and Community Engagement Coordinator know. We will contact the Shopping Centre to request permission to setup a Vinnies table. On the day, we will provide tables, chairs, Vinnies tablecloth, merchandise and a list of groceries that the Community can donate to provide support to your local Vinnies Support Centres (VSC). As shoppers enter the Shopping Centre, they may like to take a slip of paper that contains a list of desired groceries for donation.

Shoppers can buy as little or as much as they like, and then leave their donated grocery item in a shopping trolley next to the Vinnies table. At the same time, they may like to have a look at some of the Vinnies flyers, utilise some of the merchandise, and

chat to a Vinnies Member. The Member and Community Engagement team will provide all materials to Members and liaise with the Shopping centre. All you need to provide is a few Members (at least 2 at all times) to be available for the duration of the day, and to drop off the donations to the closest VSC. Our team can be available on the day to assist if you prefer.

Vinnies Awareness Campaign at Parishes

Are you considering a recruitment/information weekend at your local parish? These can be held at any time of the year, but there are significant social justice days in the national and international calendar that can provide that extra opportunity to highlight the good works of the Society. Approaching social justice events include National Volunteer Week (Monday 15 – Sunday 21 May).

If you would like to consider having a recruitment/information campaign at your local Parish at any time during the year, you can receive support and planning help from your Member and Community Engagement team. Notices can be provided for inclusion in Parish bulletins in the lead up to the Vinnies weekend, and on the weekend itself, suggested speaking notes can be provided to a Vinnies Member to speak at the Masses, a Vinnies table can be setup with flyers, information packs and membership application forms.

Parishioners will have an opportunity to meet with Conference Members before and after Masses to ask questions and explore Vinnies as an opportunity for them to get involved.

School Fetes

Vinnies Marquee, flyers and merchandise can be available for your local school fetes – a wonderful way to let the parents and staff of your schools know about Vinnies. Please contact your Member and Community Engagement Coordinator.

Using the MAVS social justice updates

Take the opportunity to speak about Vinnies at Mass. Member speaking notes, bulletin summaries and ideas for action on key days for social justice are regularly added to MAVS and can be found at <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/social-justice/>.





HAVE ANY OF YOUR DETAILS CHANGED RECENTLY?

It's vital we keep updated data on all of members, so if you have changed any of the following, please let us know:



Address



Phone number



Email address



Conference



Membership status



Changes to name

Reminder to Members

We are constantly updating our records in the Society People system. It is important that Vinnies has your most recent and current details, so that we can advise you of any Society news, changes, etc.

Have you changed any of the following recently?

- phone number and email address
- membership status and Conference
- address
- changes to first/last name

Have you left the Society and are still receiving information?

Please let us know by contacting your Member and Community Engagement Coordinator at:

MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

MATTHEW TALBOT HOSTEL OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE

Calling all Members and Volunteers. The Matthew Talbot Hostel and Ozanam Learning Centre are seeking your support in their good works assisting the homeless and vulnerable people of Sydney.

The three types of roles available are:

Community Support Volunteer—Ozanam Learning Centre (weekdays 10am-4pm)

- Greeting and assisting all who visit the Centre
- Handling phone enquiries and providing administrative support

Dining Room Attendant—Matthew Talbot Hostel (weekends only)

- Capacity to lift e.g. chairs onto tables, trays of cutlery
- Helping to set, clear and clean tables

Kitchen Support Attendant—Matthew Talbot Hostel (weekends only)

- Assisting in preparing, serving and clearing tea service
- Assisting with vegetable preparations

If you are interested in lending a hand and would like to find out more, please contact the Volunteer Engagement Coordinator—Metro, Christopher Stevens at

Christopher.Stevens@vinnies.org.au

THANK YOU

MAVS Platform

Have you visited the Member and Volunteer Support website?

This site exists to share resources, news, contacts, and events with our members and volunteers. We want to provide members and volunteers with the tools, information and resources that will assist you in your service.

<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/home/>

We really want to know what you like and want in the Member and Volunteer online resources platform. Broken Bay Central Council has its own page:

<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/conferences/broken-bay-central-council/>

For requested updates, please email MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au

There are also lots of other updates happening on MAVS which you can check in on anytime here:

<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/mavs-latest-updates/>