



# VINNIES NEWS

## AROUND WOLLONGONG DIOCESE

### WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL DESK

Dear Brothers and Sisters

It is a privilege to take up the position of President of the Wollongong Central Council and continue to work with my fellow Central Council members through this particular role.

I would like to thank Wollongong Central Council members both past and present for their encouragement and support. In particular, I thank and acknowledge Alex Popov, our outgoing President, for his hard work and dedication.

It is an opportune time to reflect on the role of our conferences and the Wollongong Central Council within the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

The conference is the building block of our Vincentian Society. As individual Vincentians we should never underestimate our role within the Society. The central function of the conference is not charity but the spiritual development of members. 'Our founders conceived our vocation as a harmonious balance between spiritual life and social involvement' (President General, The Record, 1982).

All conference meetings should foster the spiritual growth of members. Spirituality is the purpose of the Society. Our goal is not to serve the poor, defined only as material or financial assistance, but to bring the Love and Peace of Christ. We are a Society of charity, not a welfare agency.

It is at conference meetings we develop two attributes of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society: charity (centring on one's love, benevolence and compassion) and justice (working towards everyone's individual rights in society to create a more equitable social order). Frederic Ozanam says, 'without attention being given to nurturing our own Christian love there will be no capacity for enhancing and developing the self-sacrificing love for one's neighbour.'

Vincentians use their spirituality as a springboard to do practical works in the community. It is im-

portant for conferences to abide by 'The Rule' and meet at least fortnightly, but preferably weekly. In the conference we "grow in friendship, service and spirituality, activating our faith through person-to-person contact" (The Rule: Part I, cl 1.2).

Conference life and conference work must always bring out the generosity of heart that is within all Vincentians to reach out to all. Louis Pasteur summarises this concept writing, 'I do not ask you what is your race, your faith or your opinion, but just what is your suffering.'

Conferences should also be the means of ensuring that Frederic Ozanam's vision, mission and aspiration are passed on to the young. We must pass on the light! It is the duty of conferences to develop in our youth the Vincentian spirit by establishing ties with Mini Vinnies in parish schools or being prepared to help a school to form one. High schools also have amazing social justice programs...we can encourage these as well.

It is the role of the Central Council to help conferences in the Wollongong Diocese to remain strong and committed. As Vincentians, we must maintain, through prayer and action, the mission of Frederic Ozanam and Sister Rosalie Rendu.

Over the last five months, the Society has been tested first by the bushfires and now by the Coronavirus. Please stay safe and remember to follow personal safety laws. They are there to protect you and to keep others safe. Thank you for your caring loving service to others. Vincentian works by individuals and conferences has been incredible.

We call on the help of your prayers.....

Peter Houweling

On behalf of the Wollongong Central Council



## **SOUTH REGION**

### **Regional Director - South**

Renee Cooper  
15 Peter Street  
Wagga Wagga 2650  
02 6923 1905  
renee.cooper@vinnies.org.au

## **WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL**

### **Wollongong Diocesan Office**

Kathy Ferrif  
PO Box 5259  
Minto BC 2566  
02 9820 8223  
kathy.ferrif@vinnies.org.au

### **Wollongong Central Council President**

Peter Houweling  
PO Box 5259  
Minto BC 2566  
0423 339 353  
peter.houweling@vinnies.org.au

### **Camden/Wollondilly Regional President**

Tom Gersbach (Acting)  
0408 584 782  
tomgersbach@bigpond.com  
socialjustice.wol@vinnies.org.au

### **Campbelltown Regional President**

Patrick Jordan  
0425 208 769  
pjo62542@bigpond.net.au

### **Southern Highlands Regional President**

Peter Doris  
0418 474 099  
peter.doris@vinnies.org.au

### **Wollongong Regional President**

Ray Thrift  
0400 292 755  
ray.thrift.vinnies.org.au

### **Central Illawarra Regional President**

Peter Houweling  
0423 339 353  
peter.houweling@vinnies.org.au

### **Shoalhaven Regional President**

Brian Ritchie (Acting)  
0407 915 037  
brian.ritchie39@bigpond.com

### **Join a Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul**

Do you or someone you know have an interest in the work of the Society and the life of a Vincentian?  
Contact your Regional President to find out more.

## MISSION AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT



I am Peter Gormly, in the new position of Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care, based at Campbelltown. The aim of the position is to assist in coordinating mission and spiritual development opportunities for everyone in the Society in accordance with the spirit, mission and values of the Society. Central to this role is to develop and lead pastoral care for everyone in the Society.

I am sure with the face of the landscape of Vinnies; the Strategic Plan is ever present for all of us. Leaving lots of unanswered questions, how will it impact on the people we serve, and how will I know what I need to do and who I need to contact in this new landscape.

The new structure has meant we have lost positions, this has meant some people have left the organisation. In many ways the loss is like a death, you may have built a strong relationship and depended on the people who have left. On top of this there are new and different people coming into the work place, full of energy and hope for the future. All we can think of is the loss and change we are experiencing and cannot see how it will all work for the benefit of the people we serve. Michael Whelan puts this very clearly; "when we are able to surrender to the natural rhythm of living and dying we truly live". Now, in recent weeks we have the coronavirus that has

upturned our lives, how we related to each other, our family, and what we do in our day to day lives. We may hold fear, what it all means now and into the future.

In every loss in our life we learn something new, what we did or didn't do at the time, you may have even changed your perspective of what life means for you. If we stop and reflect on our life, it is full of death and dying and loss. The life you had has changed from when you had children, when your children left home, and then seeing your children begin their lives, and having their own children. With all the changes that have happened with Vinnies no one has died, however significant change has happened for you, and the people you worked and formed good working relationships, are no longer part of your life.

As humans we want to hold onto what we know because it is safe and familiar. However, by doing this, we risk becoming resentful and angry and blaming others that we feel hurt. If I do hold onto the past, I stop living, in the true sense of the experience. Each day God calls us to be transformed into the new. We may not even notice it but each day we are becoming transformed.



# Jim Da Silva Farm

On Thursday 17 October 2019 members, staff and friends gathered at the Jim Da Silva Farm, Nowra, to celebrate the life of Anthony Nolan. Tony, as he was known to many, made a significant contribution to the Jim Da Silva Farm. After run-



*The dedication of a portion of the chapel to the memory of Anthony Nolan*

ning a successful business earlier in his life, Tony spent a number of years in religious life. After leaving this form of life Tony remained committed to living under private vows. Those present gath-



*Jim Da Silva, Christine Da Silva and Teresa Harm*

ered for Mass to commemorate Tony's life. A portion of the small chapel at the Jim Da Silva Farm was dedicated to Tony's memory.

Members and staff of Vinnies, and friends gathered on a sunny, balmy day in Nowra to celebrate this occasion. After preparations, attendees gath-

ered outside adjacent to the small chapel and joined in the celebration of an outdoor Mass.

People then gathered for a small reception. This gave people an opportunity to meet, reflect on their experience of Tony Nolan and his life, and to discuss the work and future hopes for the Jim Da Silva Farm.



*Members, friends and staff gather for a reception after Mass*

After the reception some people took an opportunity to visit the small chapel and reflect on Tony's life. Others toured the Jim Da Silva Farm to better understand the services that are offered to residents and day visitors.

By early afternoon people began to make their departures. The occasion proved to be a prayerful way to commemorate the life of Tony Nolan and remember his charitable works.

**Moss Vale Conference**

Rewards Cards

Moss Vale Vinnies conference uses the local I.G.A. loyalty card for shopping bills. The I.G.A shop allocated 20 loyalty cards to Vinnies. These cards are issued to both groups and individuals. The aim has also been to have donated rewards points given to Vinnies when a customer swipes the key tag at the cash register. Accumulated points from all the key tags equates to a dollar value. When the conference does its own shopping, this dollar value is deducted from our shopping bill. Other key tag holders are generously offering their points to benefit the needy in our community.

Birthday Cards

The conference did not want clients to be forgotten, and the idea of sending a birthday card with a hand-written verse came to realisation. A large greeting card company agreed to send a box of birthday cards. With this encouragement conference members hope to bring a smile, hope and recognition that somebody is thinking about their wellbeing.



Make a Wish Mothers.

In 2019 a new initiative was conducted by Vinnies Moss Vale to reward client mothers to acknowledge their role in promoting a child's wellbeing and in greatly influencing a child's growth and development. Conference members were able to get support from local businesses. The conference gave mothers a choice of movie tickets, body and beauty treatment, shampoo, cut



*L to R: Stephen Press, Amy Press, Brian Wilson, Bill de Boick, Fr Richard Green, Tony Ward (Moss Vale Conference President), Liz Adams, Bill Olson and Peter Doris (Southern Highlands Regional President)*

and blow wave or tint, streak, foils or perms, or accommodation in Mollymook for one week. Members have been happy to recognise very deserving mums for their strength and effort. This initiative has been a small way of doing this.

Make a Wish Fathers

St Vincent de Paul Moss Vale also wanted to acknowledge fathers in order to celebrate the important role they play in family life. Again local businesses supported conference programs by offering a professional car detail, movie tickets and meal for two at a seafood restaurant, or a seven night stay at the Vinnies holiday flats at Mollymook. The fathers involved were very grate-



ful for the gifts they received, which represent a small reward for the ongoing responsibilities these fathers have for the welfare of their families.

## Rising from the Ashes

On Saturday 29 February 2020, the richness of spirit that defines Australians was on display at the Rising from the Ashes event organised by Milton Catholic Parish. The theme was ‘Healing and Renewal’. A large crowd from the local community, Sydney, Wollongong and the far South Coast gathered at Ulladulla Civic Centre to show support for one another after the bushfires. Bishop Brian Mascord of the Diocese of Wollongong attended the event as well as Mr Peter Houweling, Wollongong Central Council President, Kathleen Thickett of the NSW State Council, and others representing bodies that serve the South Coast community.



L to R: Kathleen Thickett (Vice-President, Members, Volunteers and Youth - NSW State Council) and Peter Houweling (President, Wollongong Central Council)

A highlight of the day was an opening ceremony which followed the theme of ‘Healing and Renewal’. Uncle Noel Butler and Indigenous Australian dancers performed “Heal Land, Spirit and People” to the sound of the didgeridoo. Justin Stanwix, representing the Milton Catholic Parish Leadership Team, gave the opening address. This was followed by a ritual of prayer, scripture, music, poetry and meditation led by Fr Michael Dyer from Milton Catholic Parish. There were stalls in arts and crafts, specialty food and cakes, massage therapy, pet pampering, children’s creative art and sports, travel and home care as well as a jumping-castle and merry-go-round.

Members from a number of Vinnies young adult conferences from various Central Councils gener-

ously volunteered their services to help out on the organising committee, setting up stalls, and managing children’s activities. They also recorded interviews and filmed aspects of the day. Bottled water was delivered by Arthur Doumit, Vinnies Vice President, Archdiocese of Sydney. There were a variety of bands playing throughout the

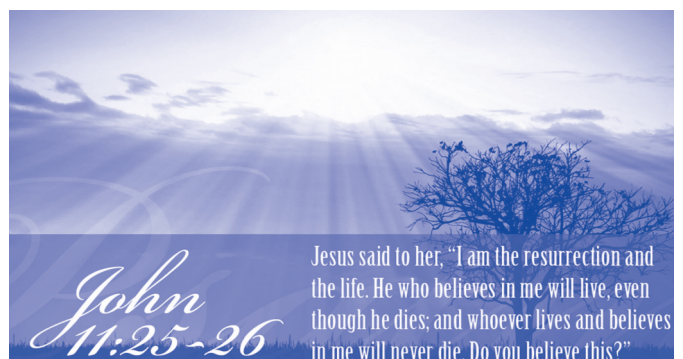


Members of Vinnies young adult conferences

day to the happy chatter of people and the laughter of children as families and their pets enjoyed the atmosphere and exhibits.

We are thankful to God for the sunshine, the care and love that was manifest in the people present from Milton/Ulladulla and beyond. Through this event a community aspiring to a rise from the ashes of the bushfires is already building a better and brighter future.

Vivienne Benson- Hodge  
Publicity Officer  
Milton Catholic Parish



# Blessing of Chamberlain Court

On Thursday 28 November 2020, a brand new 48 unit Vinnies Social and Affordable Housing complex was opened in Chamberlain Street, Campbelltown. On a beautiful sunny day, members of local conferences, volunteers and Vinnies employees attended the opening and blessing ceremony.

The occasion began with an Indigenous Australian smoking ceremony conducted by local elder, Uncle Ivan Wellington. After this, Bishop Emeritus Peter Ingham, of the Diocese of Wollongong, led prayers and presided over the blessing of the complex. Mr Brian Murnane, CEO of St Vincent de Paul Housing, has said the building represents a significant commitment by Vinnies to the local community.



*Chamberlain Court*



*Bishop Ingham blesses the new complex*

At Chamberlain Court, Vinnies provides tenants with tailored support and assistance to connect residents with other support services in the local community. Patrick Jordan, Campbelltown Regional President, spoke of the many ways the generosity and good works of members and volunteers benefit the Campbelltown community. After presentation of a commemorative plaque the ceremony concluded with refreshments.



*L to R: Patrick Jordan, Bishop Ingham and Denis Walsh display the commemorative plaque*

## Talk with a Vincentian

### Anna Leschnik, Shellharbour Conference

*Where were you born?*

I was born in the rural alpine region of Styria in Austria.

*Tell me something about your parents and siblings, and early days while you were growing up.*

When I was 2 years old I was fostered to families in the region. I had no contact with my mother for 8 years. My mother then remarried, and we became a family.

*What school did you attend?*

I attended primary school in Schwanberg. I went to high school in Vienna. I later completed a Master of Nursing at the University of Wollongong.

*What was your schooling like? Was there one teacher you have particularly fond memories of?*

I was very happy in primary school. But, I was seen as a "poor child". I did not wear shoes for most of the year. High school was difficult because I knew nothing about city life in Vienna.

*When did you join the St Vincent de Paul Society?*

January 2012. I retired from nursing after 45 years and my husband passed away in 2004. I was introduced to All Saints conference and felt it was the right place for me to be able to contribute in a positive way.

*Tell me something about the works of the Society at that time.*

Our conference members work as a team. We provide a safe place, a listening ear, a welcoming smile and help with people's needs. We provide Christmas lunches for the elderly and Christmas hampers, and help the Brekky Club at the local high school and hostel visits.

*Is there a particular incident or work that you have a particularly good memory of?*

Yes. Every year we all work together to make our Christmas luncheon a happy event. There are times when a person or family overcomes a difficult situation. We are allowed to witness this in return for the small intervention by the Society.

*Do you think the way we help people has changed over the years of your involvement with the Society?*

Yes and no. High rents and Newstart place many people below the poverty line. The Society helps in a small way. Volunteers are now getting older and are less



able to attend to home visits making it harder to understand people's circumstances.

*What do you think you have gained from your involvement with the St Vincent de Paul Society?*

I am grateful that God has led me to this kind of volunteering - the rewards far outweigh the effort. Lasting friendships with people that have God as their Lord and are of the same mind-set.

*What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your works as a Vincentian?*

To make someone's burden a little easier by listening with an attentive ear, and being allowed to provide help using the resources of the Society. To guide people to see their own strength and goodness, and help them to a place where they can plan a better future.

*Do you have any other comments?*

I hope at conference level we will always put first the person needing help. That involves walking with them awhile until they find the strength to carry on and find a meaningful solution to their situation. Society volunteers are thankful we are allowed to be a friend to all who need help.

*What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work as a Vincentian?*

I gain satisfaction assisting clients as well as being involved in the Central Illawarra Regional High Schools Support Program, breakfast and mentoring programs. I regularly visit other conferences for a chat and collegiality.

Interviewed by Peter Houweling  
Central Council President



### Poverty is Not Only an Economic Issue

Tom Gersbach, Wollongong Central Council Social Justice Representative, has shared the following information with members.

In February 2020 a major report was released on poverty in Australia based on information for the years 2017-18. The report concludes that one in every eight adult Australians and one in every six Australian children currently lives below the poverty line. The report also identifies Newstart, Youth Allowance, Age Pension, Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment as falling below the poverty line. The report identifies a need to increase these payments as a very high priority.

Additionally, since this report was released, some temporary relief has been provided by the Commonwealth Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This temporary relief has included providing a supplementary payment to people who receive the Newstart allowance and one-off payments to some other welfare recipients and vulnerable community groups.

Those who might wish to take the opportunity to advocate for the amended payment to Newstart recipients to remain in place permanently in the

interests of social justice and fairness can contact the Social Justice Representative at:

[socialjustice.wol@vinnies.org.au](mailto:socialjustice.wol@vinnies.org.au)

Further information about the report and related articles can be found via the following links:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/apr/15/poverty-as-a-moral-question-do-we-have-the-collective-will-to-end-it>

<https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/economic-stimulus-to-fight-poverty>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jul/01/it-is-not-a-pipe-dream-five->



### Contributions to the Vinnies Newsletter

Contributions from members are welcome and encouraged. If you have a short piece of news and photos to share with other members or wish to share some information send your contribution to:

[philip.riordan@vinnies.org.au](mailto:philip.riordan@vinnies.org.au)

PLEASE NOTE: Those who submit photos need to have permission from those people who are in the photos for Vinnies to use those photos in the Vinnies Newsletter and other Vinnies publications. Contact us for a copy of a talent release form using the email address above.



## Farewell to Teresa Harm

On Wednesday 20 November 2019 members, volunteers, staff and friends gathered at the Wollongong Diocesan Office at Eagle Vale to bid both a joyful and sad farewell to Teresa Harm, Head of Mission Engagement and Pastoral Care.

Teresa has a long and close association with the work of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Having worked for six years as a volunteer, Teresa made a major contribution to the award-winning Animation Project in Macquarie Fields.

Teresa later worked for 15 years as a paid employee for Vinnies NSW. In that time she made a further significant contribution to the membership



*Reflecting on the past and looking to the future - Teresa Harm, and Peter Houweling (Central Illawarra Regional President)*

of the Society through her work in member support. In this role, Teresa organised and delivered member training, especially in the areas of Welcome Friend/Society Orientation and Child-Safeguarding.

Teresa was also very proactive in supporting the spiritual development of the membership and formation of members in Vincentian spirituality. Teresa's close association with the membership and her commitment to preserving Vincentian spirituality proved to be an invaluable resource for mem-



bers of all conferences in the Wollongong Central Council.

Attendance at Teresa's farewell was a testimony to the value that everyone places on the contribution she made to supporting the membership of the Society and, through the membership, those the Society assists. Teresa's passionate advocacy for the poor and for greater social equality was always evident to those who worked with Teresa.

Those who attended the farewell gathering enjoyed pleas-

ant company and nice food. This was also an opportunity for Teresa to share some time with as many people as possible.

Following lunch, Peter Quarmby who was Teresa's reporting manager, spoke eloquently of the contribution Teresa made and how much her passion and presence would be missed.



*A warm farewell - L to R: Rhonda Maher (Warrawong Conference), Teresa Harm, and Peter Quarmby (Executive Officer, Wollongong Central Council)*

Teresa then responded with an entertaining speech and anecdotes about her experiences in Vinnies over the many years of her association with the Society. Teresa will be remembered in both our thoughts and our prayers.



## Vincentian Family Statement on the Pandemic Caused by COVID-19

In light of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus which has affected every country throughout the world, the worldwide Vincentian Family unites itself to the efforts of those individuals who have been mobilized to minimize the spread of this virus and ultimately, to eradicate this virus.

The Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family requests all the members of our spiritual family to collaborate actively to prevent the further spreading of this virus. As good citizens, let us contribute our grain of sand and promptly follow the directives and guidelines of those individuals ministering on the frontlines to alleviate and care for those who have been afflicted with this virus.

With regard to the ministries and services that we offer on a worldwide basis to people in need, let us ensure that the needs of the poor are not neglected, especially those most basic needs of food and health care. Let us minister in a way that does not endanger our health and does not further spread the virus, but let us act in accord with the best practices and the guidelines that are presented by national and international experts.

Let us trust in the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent de Paul and all the saints and blessed of the Vincentian Family and pray that this virus be conquered and that in a brief period of time the world situation might be better.

We invite all the members of the Vincentian Family to pray, individually, as a family or a group (if the situation allows such) the following words on a daily basis:

*Gracious God, protector of the defenceless, look with compassion on your people who are suffering from the dangers of this global pandemic.*

*Be compassionate toward us, show us your infinite mercy and guide the hands of those who are attempting to overcome this situation!*

*Instil within us a spirit of generosity so that we might know how to assist those who are weakest: the elderly, the homeless and the impoverished...*

*those who bear the brunt of this crisis.*

*Let us approach these individuals and assist them in these difficult times!*

*Protect the doctors and nurses and all health-care professionals who are on the frontlines of this pandemic!*

*Enlighten their minds so that they might find a cure.*

*We ask all of this through the intercession of Jesus Christ, your Son Our Lord, the protector of those in need. Amen.*

We pray the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary together.

### Updates

#### Member Gathering 2020

The member Gathering at Hartzler Park, Burradoo, and commissioning ceremony for Peter Houweling, Wollongong Central Council President, listed for Friday 8 May 2020 has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that the commissioning ceremony for the new Wollongong Central Council President will be incorporated into the Annual Central Council Mass later in the year.

#### Conference Training

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all face-to-face training has been cancelled until at least August 2020. We are currently exploring the possibility of members having access to online training modules through the Vinnies Learning Centre portal.



**Prayer for Deceased Vincentians**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.  
Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication.

If You, O Lord, shall observe iniquities,  
Lord, who shall endure it?

For with You there is merciful forgiveness,  
And by reason of Your law I have waited for You,  
O Lord.

My soul has relied on His word, my soul has  
hoped in the Lord.

From the morning watch even unto the night let  
Israel hope in the Lord,

Because with the Lord there is mercy and with  
Him plentiful redemption,

And He will redeem Israel from all the iniquities.

**V. Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord**

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

**V. May they rest in peace**

R. Amen.



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