

WAGGA WAGGA CENTRAL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

May 2025

A message from the Central Council President

Welcome to the May newsletter.

The year is moving fast with the 'Family Fun Day' at Wagga on 26 April and Easter already past.

Please read Leonie Duck, Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care's article on page 4 about Hope. It is most enlightening.

Perhaps the most important thing besides Training, Membership Recruitment, Fundraising, the August Community Sleepouts and Safeguarding are the Regional Get Together meet and greet days scheduled for later this year. Should you, as a member or conference president, wish to have any content or issue raised and addressed at your Regional Get Together, then contact your Regional President to have it included in the day's agenda to be answered and discussed.

The Regional Get Togethers are scheduled as follows (venues TBA):

- Wagga Wagga -13 Sept 2025
- Albury – 27 Sept 2025
- Leeton – 23 Oct 2025
- Finley – 3 Nov 2025

Anthony Foley
Wagga Wagga Central Council
President

Enjoy reading all about Wagga Central Council Good Works!



Wagga Central Council Commissioning Ceremony

On Saturday February 15, Wagga Wagga Central Council celebrated it's new President, Anthony Foley, in a Commissioning Ceremony held at Sacred Heart Church, North Albury.

Attending this ceremony were St Vincent de Paul members, Central Council representatives, local staff, outgoing Central Council President Peter Burgess, Executive Director (MVEI) Sam Crosby and Executive Director (Mission and Formation) Leo Tucker.

Congratulations, Anthony!



In this quarterly newsletter you can expect:

- Welcome
- Family Fun Day
- Youth & Schools
- Pastoral care
- Client support
- Social Justice
- Regional stories
- Useful resources

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Wagga Vinnies Family Fun Day

A Wonderful Day of Community, Fun, and Connection

The Vinnies Family Fun Day community event on Saturday April 26 was a resounding success, bringing together over 1200 adults and children in a day full of free fun, laughter, and connection. The weather was perfect, and the energy was even better, as families, and friends gathered to enjoy an exciting array of activities from facepainting to pony rides, bush craft to jumping castles and amusements rides, all tied together with a delicious sausage sizzle. People were smiling, chatting, and collaborating — a perfect reminder of the power of shared experiences.

Community members have shared how much they appreciated the opportunity to take part in such an event without financial barriers. Many expressed gratitude for the chance to spend quality time together, free from the worries of cost. “We enjoyed that everything was free. It was fantastic to be able to take the kids out and not stress over the cost of every ride and food. For a volunteer run free event this was amazing. Thank you,” one attendee said.

This was all made possible by the generous spirit of our community, not in the least, the time and effort of our St Vincent de Paul members, volunteers and staff.



EAPA Training

Helping NSW Households Manage Rising Energy Costs Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme

The EAPA scheme offers short-term financial support to NSW households experiencing difficulty paying their energy bills due to unexpected financial hardship or emergencies. Assistance is provided in the form of \$50 digital vouchers up to the value of \$500, which are applied directly to outstanding electricity or natural gas bills, helping to ease the financial burden on struggling families.

We understand the challenges faced by those in need. That's why our registered Conferences that have opted in are now providing EAPA assessments to clients who require support in managing their energy costs.

If your Conference would like to participate in delivering this vital assistance, or if you need more information on how to support clients through EAPA, please contact Lisa Whillans, Client and Member Support Officer.



Pictured: Anne Wall (Narrandera) and Marrianne Hoskinson (Leeton) all smiles after completing the 2025 training refresher.

Wagga Wagga Multicultural Playgroup

A Special Visit to Our Vinnies Multicultural Playgroup!



Pictured: Playgroup families, Vinnies staff and MP Dr Joe McGirr stopping for a photo but not stopping the focused play of some playgroup children!

We were thrilled to have a special guest at our Multicultural Playgroup on the 6th March – none other than Member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Joe McGirr!

The visit was a wonderful opportunity for little ones and their families to interact with someone who represents our local community in the government. During the visit, Dr Joe took the time to meet with the children, learn about the diverse cultures in our playgroup, and chat with parents about the importance of fostering inclusivity and celebrating our differences from a young age.

It was a warm, lively event filled with laughter, facepainting, story time and inspiring conversations about the value of multiculturalism in our community. We were so happy to showcase the incredible impact Vinnies playgroup has on building connections and understanding between families from various backgrounds.

We are grateful for the support of Dr Joe and his interest in helping to make our community an even more welcoming place for everyone!

O-Week 2025 Milestone

During O-Week 2025, Schools and Youth Engagement Officer, Lincoln Weir, represented the Society at both the Wagga Wagga and Albury campuses of Charles Sturt University, where we experienced an incredible level of engagement from students.

Post O-Week, the momentum continued with lively BBQ events, which successfully brought together students and created an inviting space to learn more about the mission and work of St Vincent de Paul Society. The events highlighted the enthusiasm and potential of young people to contribute meaningfully to their local communities.

After a strong number of expressions of interest, we're excited to be onboarding 11 new young adult members into their Vincentian Youth journey. And, in a historic first for the Society, we are proud to announce that there will be a formation of a South Region, University Young Adult Conference. This marks a significant step forward in expanding our presence and empowering young adults in new areas.

With strong beginnings and passionate new members, the South Region is set for a vibrant year of growth, connection, and service.



Pictured: Wagga Wagga Central Council President, Anthony Foley on the BBQ, supporting the event.

Mission, Spirituality & Pastoral Care

In the Wollongong Central Council (which I also support) we have resumed retreat/spirituality days and I look forward to sharing similar events with you in each of the Wagga Wagga Central Council regions.

We've been exploring the meaning of hope and what it means for us both personally and as Vincentians. We considered what hope means in a secular sense and what it means in our Christian context, and its relevance to our work with the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Very early in his pontificate, Pope Francis explained the true meaning of hope in saying:

"it is much more than simple optimism for Christians, it is constant expectation, it's a gift from the Holy Spirit, it's a miracle of renewal that never lets us down".

He was speaking at morning Mass at Casa Santa Marta, 2013.

To quote from last year's papal bull, in which he declared this year to be a Jubilee Year of Hope:

Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross.

By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives.

Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love.

The motto of the St Vincent de Paul Society worldwide is *Serviens in Spe* (serve in hope) and our mission includes offering a hand up to people in need, by "respecting every person's dignity [and] sharing our hope".

It was interesting to reflect on the words of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin addressing Catholic healthcare workers in the Diocese of Chicago in 1995. His words seem very relevant to the service that we in the Society provide:

"Our distinctive vocation in Christian healthcare (charity) is not so much to heal (assist people experiencing poverty) better or more efficiently than anyone else; it is to bring comfort to people by giving them an experience that will strengthen their confidence in life. The ultimate goal of our care is to give those who are ill (in need) ...a reason to hope...in this we find the Christian vocation that makes our healthcare (charity) truly distinctive".

A retreat is a great opportunity for members to come together to share their experiences and their spirituality - a fundamental element of St Vincent de Paul membership. I hope there will be an opportunity for us to do this in Wagga regions later in the year.

Leonie Duck

Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care Partner - South



Client support – A case study

Achieving Excellent Outcomes: A Hand Up, Conference and Client Support

A Wagga Conference was contacted by a local parish priest regarding a client in crisis—Lara*, who was homeless and had spent several nights on the streets. After an initial phone conversation with Lara, the Conference immediately reached out to Lisa, Client and Member Support Officer, to coordinate assistance and help Lara regain stability in her life.

Lara's story is one of resilience. Having arrived in Australia over 20 years ago as a young child, Lara holds a bridging visa that allows her to work and study but prevents her from accessing vital services such as Medicare or Centrelink. Lara's situation took a turn for the worse after experiencing domestic violence. She relocated for a job opportunity, but soon after, she suffered from severe depression, which led to a suicide attempt. She was transported to the emergency department by ambulance, where she received treatment and medication, accumulating over \$5,000 in medical debt. Unable to afford ongoing care, Lara's condition worsened, leading to job loss and, ultimately, eviction.

Upon meeting with Lara, the Conference took immediate action by securing emergency accommodation in a local motel, as she was ineligible for support from Link2Home. While housing services were at capacity and could only offer a tent, the Conference ensured Lara had a roof over her head, food and essential supplies, along with access to a medical appointment to resume her treatment. Lisa collaborated with the Red Cross to obtain a \$5,000 domestic violence assistance payment, which enabled Lara to pay for temporary accommodation. Additionally, Lisa worked with Centrelink's Multicultural Officer to apply for a Special Benefit on Lara's behalf and referred her to the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) to support her application for residency or citizenship.

The impact of this support was profound. Lara recently secured employment as a receptionist and will begin her new role next week. To help her feel confident for her interview, the Conference provided a Vinnies retail shop voucher, ensuring she looked and felt her best. Lisa is also working with financial counselling services to develop a plan for Lara's medical debt and will be advocating to NSW Health for a waiver or payment arrangement.

With newfound stability, Lara is now planning to use the domestic violence payment to secure a room to rent near her workplace. Today, she carries a radiant smile—filled with hope and determination—as she embarks on her new career. Thanks to the wraparound support of the Conference and Lisa, Lara is on the path to rebuilding her life with dignity and confidence.

At the Society we believe in providing not just a helping hand, but a path forward. Lara's journey is a testament to the power of compassionate and coordinated support in transforming lives.

*name changed for privacy purposes

Lisa Whillans, the Client and Member Support Officer, welcomes clients in a way that builds their confidence in themselves and the service, conducting assessments to identify the required range of supports, and coordinating referrals to both internal and external services. She monitors the outcomes of these referrals, evaluates their effectiveness, and advocates on behalf of clients experiencing disadvantage to improve their circumstances. Lisa works collaboratively with Conferences and other service providers, ensuring tailored and effective assistance is delivered. She can be reached at 0466 570 691 or via email at lisa.whillans@vinnies.org.au.



Social Justice

Former Wagga Wagga Central Council Social Justice Representative, Clare Reeves, has resigned her position to move interstate for personal reasons. We wish Clare well and thank her for her short but enthusiastic embrace of the role.

If you or another conference member is interested in representing the diocese on the state Social Justice Committee, please contact the staff team.

Leading up to the Federal election, the National Council endorsed The Society's federal election statement titled: 'Justice and Compassion'.

This statement calls for changes that reduce inequality, lift people out of poverty and improve their physical and emotional wellbeing and ask that the elected government take action to achieve this through:

- Supporting an adequate safety net for all
- Providing housing security across the country
- Addressing the needs of First Nations peoples
- Rising to the refugee challenge



For the latest updates on Social Justice, visit <https://socialjustice.vinnies.org.au/> or click [here](#) for more information

Around the Regions

Griffith Care and Support Update

Our Griffith members were back in the kitchen in March whipping up some delicious meal, demonstrating their skills with delicious rissoles, rice and veggies for the first meal. These home cooked meals, made with fresh ingredients, are part of emergency relief food hampers given to those in need from the local community.

Rent as we all know is so expensive at present and we have found that our office here in Griffith is far too much to expect Vinnies to hand out each week. With this in mind, we are excited to say that we have started looking into affordable alternatives with our Griffith Care and Support Office. Recently, Ana came over to Griffith and she and a real estate office person showed us potential rental spaces. We continue to hope we may be able to negotiate a fair price for our new rental office for our future. We will await in great enthusiasm for the outcome.

Wishing everyone a Happy Easter.
God Bless,
Yvonne Couper
President Griffith Conference



Pictured: Griffith's member-cooked meals served up into takeaway containers, ready for distribution.

Out and About



Pictured: Local high school students helped put together school snack packs at the Griffith HYPE community event



Pictured: Members + NILS teamed up at the Wagga Bring Your Own Bills event hosted by Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW



Pictured: Vinnies stall at the Riverina Community College Open Day

A few reminders:

May: Launch of Vinnies Winter Appeal
May 9: St Louise de Marillac Feast Day
May 19 - May 25: National Volunteer Week
May 26: National Sorry Day
May 27 - June 3: Reconciliation Week
June 9: King's Birthday Public Holiday
June 15 - June 21: Refugee Week
July 6 - July 13: NAIDOC Week
July 30: International Day of Friendship



RIVERINA

Follow us on Facebook

Information on the Wagga Wagga Central Council area is being updated regularly on the Vinnies Riverina Facebook page.

If you have an event or good news story to share, please contact
Shannan | shannan.carey@vinnies.org.au



Support program

The Society has partnered with Converge International to provide you with free, confidential coaching support for up to 4 sessions per issue to help you deal with the challenges, concerns or issues that may be affecting you.

Call 1300 687 327 or visit
www.convergeinternational.com.au

Useful resources



Regional Get Togethers

September 13: Wagga Wagga Region
September 27: Albury Region
October 23: Murrumbidgee Region
November 3: South West Region



Safeguarding

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
1800 478 776

Have you encountered any concerns while assisting families with children or vulnerable adults? Vinnies Safeguarding Team can offer additional support and information.



New Members needed

The St Vincent de Paul Society only exists through the action of our Members and Volunteers.

If you know of someone willing to give a hand up as a Member, retail volunteer or as part of the Vinnies Van team, please encourage them to contact membership@vinnies.org.au or scan the QR code above.

Free training courses

Members may be interested in the following courses being offered online:

Good Shepherd
Topic: Financial Conversations 101
When: May 20, 2025 9:30AM
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/financial-conversations-101-tickets-1347334195849>

Anglicare
Topic: Managing Aggression in the Workplace
When: May 28, 2025 12:00 PM
Register: https://anglicare-org-au.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RhMexrZZSE2e8Ts0WV-GNA

Black Dog Institute
Topic: Recognise and Respond - Suicide Prevention for Everyday Life
When: Anytime
<https://mphn.org.au/mhs/bdi-recognise-and-respond>

Any questions or assistance, contact
Shannan | shannan.carey@vinnies.org.au

Blue Knot Foundation

Building a Trauma Informed Community

Trauma training

Blue Knot Foundation is running a series of free online workshops for those who are helping people experiencing different types of trauma.

Further information is available on the Blue Knot Foundation website
www.blueknot.org.au/supporters/supporter-workshops/

Upcoming Dates for the Trauma Supporter workshops
(Details at: <https://blueknot.org.au/supporters/supporter-workshops/>)

24 May 2025, 10am to 4pm
21 June 2025, 10am to 4pm