



VINNIES NEWS

AROUND WOLLONGONG DIOCESE

WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL DESK

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Pierre Chouard was a past President General of the Society, who developed an in-depth vision of our organization and its place in the world. He saw in a world-wide Society six essential characteristics:

1. Deeply Fraternal

As Vincentians, we must display a special friendliness to each other because we share special interests and ideals. We should see each other as 'family' in order to demonstrate our inclusiveness, and our respect and support for our unique vocation.

2. Lay, Christian and Familial

Pierre was aware that most members have family responsibilities. In order to share in Pierre's vision of the Society, we need to balance the work we do within the Society with our family obligations outside the Society.

3. Youthful in Spirit

The Society was founded by young people. Pierre suggested we maintain a 'youthful spirit', no matter what our age. A youthful spirit was carefully nurtured by our founders. This must remain 'an original and permanent characteristic of the Society of St Vincent de Paul'.

4. Universal

We can often forget the universality of the Society. We must always bear in mind that we are not a national body but an international organization. When we think locally, how often have you heard the term, 'my patch!' At every level of the Society, we can be guilty of making too many practical decisions and governance choices in terms of 'thinking locally, not globally'.

5. United in Diversity, Adapting to Change
How relevant this is in the Society today! In adopting this part of Pierre's vision, conferences need to develop new approaches to the charitable work that we do. We can do this by being adaptable and seeking out different ways of responding to new forms of poverty and disadvantage.

6. Ecumenical within the Universal Church
This characteristic of Pierre's vision requires us all to be careful, at the conference level, not to act like small and exclusive clubs. Conferences should be inviting and encouraging. Pierre wrote that we are apostles of witness and not proselytizers. We should be welcoming to all who wish to share our ideals.

The Rule is our foundation. It guides us, shows us how to pass on 'the light', make good decisions and maintain appropriate governance standards. It is important that we each have a good understanding of the Rule.

Please, stay safe. Maintain social distancing rules and continue safe practices the Society and government have directed us all to follow. On behalf of the Central Council, I thank you all for the wonderful works that you do in these difficult times.

Finally, special thanks should go to those executive position-holders that support us – Renee Cooper, Philip Riordan, Peter Gormly and Kathy Ferrif. The Central Council is very fortunate to have these dedicated people to guide us and support us to implement Society policy.

Peter Houweling

On behalf of the Wollongong Central Council



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Join a Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul

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

GROWTH THROUGH CHANGE

It may seem like little has happened during COVID-19. However, many things have happened. The Strategic Plan, shops and services closing, and changes to the way essential services operate. This has raised anxieties and fears for many people, but it has also brought new opportunities that would not have happened without it. Families I have spoken to say they have responded positively. One of the most common messages that I have heard is that families have had more time to be with each other, and to talk to each other.

If we stop and reflect on what has helped to sustain us during this time, maybe your answer would be along the lines of relationships/friends, the love and care you have for other people, and the love and care that they hold for you. We all strive to love and be loved and feel a sense of belonging. When we feel secure in our lives, we feel joy and peace. At times we might find we place greater importance on what other people say and think. This can give meaning to our lives. Other people may put these ideas aside and hold on to what is important to them personally.

One cannot help but stop and reflect on the impact on our lives. Maybe you are trying to find meaning and purpose in your life. I find it useful to ‘stop and reflect’ on what is important in that moment. This may be done by walking along the beach or in the bush. We may find it useful to have a candle alight and reflect on the Scriptures, or to read poetry. We may choose to use a jour-

nal. We may find it helpful to unpack and understand what has happened. Life is never straight forward.

One complex challenge is to adjust our daily lives. What have we been doing with our time? Does it give us joy and hope in our lives? Maybe now is an opportunity to evaluate our purpose and how

we want to contribute to society into the future. We have all been given a gift that is unique to us - intuition, compassion, passion and energy – for all the people we serve. How we do this will be different for every person.

“We give thanks to places of simplicity and peace. Let us find such a place within ourselves. We give thanks for places of refuge and beauty. Let us find such a place within ourselves. We give thanks for places of nature’s truth and freedom, of joy, inspiration and renewal, places where all creatures may find acceptance and belonging. Let us search for these places: in the world, in ourselves and in others. Let us

restore them. Let us strengthen and protect them and let us create them. May we mend this outer world according to the truth of our inner life and may our souls be shaped and nourished by nature’s eternal wisdom.”

Amen**

Peter Gormly
Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral
Care Partner—South



**Michael Leunig, *When I Talk to You*, p 79



Above and Beyond 'The Rule'

Colin Billett is vice president of Milton-Ulladulla conference. He has been a member of the Society for over 15 years. From October last year, Colin provided outstanding support to people in need due to the bushfires and COVID-19.

hearts beat with the heartbeat of the poor. They do not judge those they serve, rather they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister" (Clause 1.9).



Colin worked tirelessly both at the local Bushfire Recovery Centre and the local Conference Welfare Centre. He assisted people to complete and submit claims, and followed them up with the Wagga Office. In 2020, Colin has still been overseeing Bushfire Recovery claims.

During the pandemic, Colin complied with social distancing rules while assisting the community. Our Conference Welfare Centre operates Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 am to 12 noon. Colin is always there. Before he arrives, he often visits the Centrelink Office and hands out food vouchers to those seeking assistance.

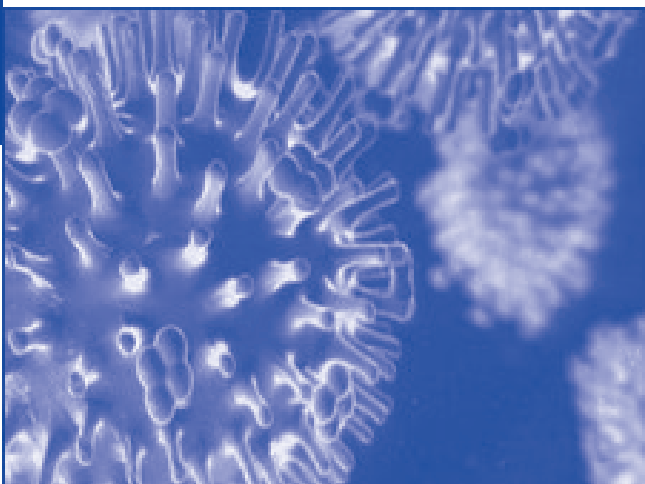
The Rule says, "Vincentians endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. Conscious of their frailty and weakness, their



Often, callers to the Conference Welfare Centre will ask, "is Col there, please?" This shows how good Colin's relationship is with members of the local community and their high regard for him. Over many years, Col has demonstrated his commitment to social justice. He currently chairs monthly interagency meetings in the local community. But, he is a humble man. He does not seek accolades for his commitment to conference works. When someone thanks him for his efforts, his reply is almost always, "it's a team effort."

I am very proud to be a member of the Milton-Ulladulla conference and of being conference president over most of the past four years. My role has been made so much easier because of the support and effort of Colin Billett. He is a true "Vinnies hero."

Neil Parker
President, Ulladulla Conference



Regional Mass and Commissioning

On Sunday, 15 March 2020, the annual Mass for conferences in the Campbelltown Region was held at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, Varroville. Fr Shane Kelleher, OCD, welcomed all Vincentians present and the local parish community. During the Mass, Fr Kelleher acknowledged the good works of conference members and the special work of the Nagle Centre, explaining how they assist people in the local community.

During the Mass, the new president of Campbelltown conference, Joseph Gill, was commissioned. This was witnessed by all those present at the Mass, who shared in the experience by providing Joseph encouragement and support in the role. Congratulations to Joseph.

In addition, two new members, Marguerite Donohue and Geoff Carey, were commissioned into Vincentian life in the Society. Congratulations, also, to Marguerite and Geoff. This was an important time when Joseph, Marguerite and Geoff were each able to stop and reflect on this very important step in their growing commitment to their faith, to their vocation in the Society and to their commitment to the people they assist.

As the Rule states, “Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God’s image. In the poor, they see the suffering Christ” (Clause 1.8). And, “The Vincentian vocation affects all aspects of members’ daily lives, making them more sensitive and caring in their family, work and leisure activities. Vincentians are available for work in the conferences only after fulfilling their family and professional duties” (Clause 2.6).

Members demonstrate a high level of commitment, passion and determination in the way they live and serve in the spirit of Frederic Ozanam, Rosalie Rendu and Charles O’Neill. They do this through prayer, faith and the care they provide to the people they serve.

After the final blessing at the end of Mass, Vincentians, members of the parish community and staff of the Society enjoyed food, tea and coffee. The parish was very hospitable, warm and welcoming towards the Vincentians, and displayed a profound curiosity for the work of the Society. Vincentians, their good works and special works are held in high esteem in the parish.

VALE Bill Eccleston

On Friday 28 August 2020, it was with great sadness that members and family attended the funeral of Mr Bill Eccleston of St Michael’s conference, Mittagong. For many years, Bill played a major role in the life and work of the Society in the

Southern Highlands Region. Bill will be remembered for the contribution he made to the welfare of the southern highlands community over those years. Members are asked to remember Bill and his surviving family in their prayers.



Illawarra-Shoalhaven Vinnies Van

Vinnies Van services have operated throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We have delivered meals, sandwiches, snacks, fruit, vegetables and bread four nights-a-week in Wollongong, Warrawong, Bellambi and at Albion Park Railway Station. We continued with two staff and some amazing volunteers, and we have never cancelled any of these services. The Van supplies aprons, masks and double-strength gloves to volunteers and we adhere to social distancing regulations. Visitors to the Van also adhere to social distancing rules.

In March 2020, when the health crisis began, the Van struggled to obtain fresh produce for the dinners we provide. Shellharbour Club, West Leagues Club (Aster Group) and WIN Entertainment Centre provided delicatessen meats, butter, margarine, fresh vegetables, sauces, cheese,



bread, protein, eggs, fresh milk, peeled potatoes, peeled onions, orange juice and pineapple juice to the Van and to Coniston Hub. This allowed Vinnies Vans and the Coniston Hub to continue their services. The Hub gave 120 frozen meals in one week alone, while the Van gave out over 100 meals, 240 sandwiches and over 100 Van bags filled with fresh fruit and vegetables with a chocolate cookie on service.

Initially, the number of people seeking assistance fell while, on other nights, we would assist up to 30 people. The number of visitors to the Van is now increasing again. Woolworths OzHarvest and Coles Second Bite supplied fresh produce that we



offered to families stranded because of the crisis. The Van has also delivered fresh fruit, vegetables and bread to international students attending the University of Wollongong. Deliveries have been made once- or twice-a-week. Staff and residents of the university have been very appreciative.

Aldi also provided the Van and the Coniston Hub with bread, fresh produce and protein over this period of time including Easter packs, hot meals, sandwiches, bread, pantry items, coffee, snacks, fruit, Easter chocolates and gifts. Amazing staff packed all these things and safely delivered them. David Jones Food Department have delivered biscuits, shortbread, jams, coffee, tea, chocolates, sauces, condiments, lollies and more.

For Mothers' Day, visitors to the Van were given a surprise bag of groceries. Patrons of Coniston Homeless Coordination Service and disadvantaged university students also received these items. Hats for the Homeless knitted beautiful beanies and scarves for visitors to the Van and Corpus Christi Catholic High School collected and donated 10 washing baskets of winter woollies. We would like to say a big thankyou to all these outlets and groups for their generous support. For more information about the Vinnies Van contact:

Tel: 02 4228 8140

Em: vinniesvan@vinnies.org.au

Kelly McCrohon
Coordinator, Illawarra Shoalhaven Vinnies Vans

Nagle Centre COVID-19 Response

The Nagle Centre, in Campbelltown, has continued to operate during the pandemic. The Nagle Centre team has found ways to deliver services in new and unexpected ways. As team leader, I have been honoured to be part of a team that has been willing to go the extra mile to ensure the vulnerable in our community are able to access assistance.

The Nagle Centre is supporting local conferences by providing them with fresh food hampers from OzHarvest to give to people they assist. We have also been partnering with the Department of Communities and Justice at Campbelltown to provide fresh fruit and vegetables for families that their office has been working with. The Nagle Centre recently received the following from a worker:



The Nagle Centre still provides breakfast and lunch from Monday to Friday. Breakfast time has been from 9:30 to 10:00 am and lunch has been served from 12 noon to 12:30. All meals are takeaway and we all adhere to social distancing rules. At first, we began a takeaway service from the carpark. As the weather became colder, particularly for breakfast, we moved inside while continuing to follow social distancing rules.

Case work and appointments for assistance have been done by phone to avoid face to face contact. We have continued to help with electricity and gas bills, pharmacy prescriptions, bushfire assistance payments, food hampers and laundromat vouchers. Our counsellor has provided counselling by phone.

The Anxiety Disorders Support Group has met by phone/video call. During a time of uncertainty, this group has provided a supportive community that understands and cares for each other.

Volunteers have not been working on site. They have supported their community by doing the shopping for those who are vulnerable, or by collecting and dropping off fresh food hampers. Thank you to them all.

*"I would just like to say a big thank you to Nagle Centre, Campbelltown. I have been able to help out two people with care packages & homemade soup. A neighbour, Jane, lost her partner. Her family are in Canberra, so she can't see them. Jane works as a volunteer and she is on a pension. Money is tight and Jane is appreciative of the care packs of soup or a meal once a week. My elderly friend, John, lives in a caravan park and is undergoing chemo, so he is susceptible to infection. John is appreciative of the care packs and meals that I give him. Thank you for the food you are giving. It is very much appreciated." ***

The Nagle Centre is thankful to OzHarvest for items we are able to share with the community. The Nagle Centre can be contacted at the following:

Tel: 02 4628 2928 (9:30-10 am or 12-12:30 pm)

Em: naglecentre@vinnies.org.au

Leonie Evans
Team Leader, the Nagle Centre

**Changes have been made to protect privacy.

Talk with a Vincentian Peter Doris, Mittagong Conference

Where were you born?

I was born in County Longford in the Republic of Ireland.

Tell me something about growing up with your family.

In 1940, my parents met in London. My father was a carpenter who made ammunition boxes and my mother worked at Smith's Clock Factory. They married and moved to County Longford. I am the eldest and have two married sisters who also live there.

What school did you attend and what was it like?

My primary years were at Ennybegs National School. We had turf fires and all teachers had a rod for discipline. I then attended St Norbett's College in County Cavan. I had great respect for one teacher, Fr Kenny, a Galway man. I corresponded with him until his death. I played Gaelic Football in high school and then in Australia.

When did you join the St Vincent de Paul Society?

In 1995, I joined St Joseph's conference. In 1942, the Society began St Michael's and St Thomas Aquinas's conferences in the highlands. In 2010, I joined St Michael's conference in Mittagong. I was in awe of the work being done by members.

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

St Joseph's conference covered the Moorebank, Chipping Norton, Holsworthy and Hammondville areas and the flats around Speed Street, Liverpool. Our clients included families, refugees, migrants and students. We delivered hampers, Woolies cards, electricity vouchers, Telstra vouchers and did home visitation in the evening due to work commitments.

I was nominated president at St Michael's conference. That was a great honor. Many of the members had decades of service. The focus at St Michael's was different but the Vincentian spirit was the same. We hosted an event for the Cornwalls, Ecclestons, Sewells, Goodfellows, Carlons and Merediths to celebrate their 60 years of service and acknowledge their great Vincentian spirit.



Is there a particular incident from that time you especially remember?

Ken (Spud) Murphy was a great character at Mt Pritchard. He was extremely helpful and could scrounge up any household item we needed. There were many other great Vincentians at that time, including Don Regan, Bernie Loughlin, Tom Kid, Brian Cooney, Tony Feraud, Wall Kelleway and Hugh de Lapp.

Do you think the way the Society assists people has changed since then?

In my 25 years with the Society, communities have changed dramatically. The Society has adjusted to these changes and continues to provide great service in the Vincentian spirit. Incorporation of the Society was necessary which has affected conferences, especially in rural areas. My hope is the Society will again adapt in this current situation and come out stronger on the other side.

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

It is the help and guidance I have received during my time in the Southern Highlands. Therefore, I would like to thank conference presidents past and present – Roger Cole, Bruce Cowan, John Bulters, Brian Wilson and Tony Ward, previous Central Council presidents Denis Walsh, Gaynor Mason as well as past and present members of staff.

Peter Doris

Regional President - Southern Highlands

Build Homes, Build Hope

Despite social distancing regulations and restrictions on movement, the Wollongong Central Council's social justice agenda continues to move forward with energy.

Members of the Wollongong Central Council have collaborated with Vinnies' 'Build Homes, Build Hope' social housing campaign. Tom Gersbach, Social Justice Representative, and all conference presidents have been writing to, and asking, NSW State Members of Parliament and local Federal Members of Parliament to support this exciting initiative.

In light of the COVID-19 public health crisis, members have shown a particular concern that there will be even greater numbers of people who will lose employment and access to income as a result of an economic downturn. This will result in an increase in the number of people who will have limited options for housing and accommodation. The 'Build Homes, Build Hope' initiative has been a response to existing needs for more social housing and anticipates a greater need in the future, so that we can create a more just society.

"Social housing should be a safety net that supports people at-risk of, or experiencing, homelessness."



Members, volunteers and staff as 'One Society' are campaigning for an increase in social housing occupancies of 5,000 annually for the next 10 years. This is why the initiative is called 'Build Homes, Build Hope'.

All members of the Wollongong Central Council are invited to support the initiative practically as well as in their prayers. Please contact your conference president to sign a petition.

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:

Em: 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. You can obtain a Talent Release Form using the same email address.



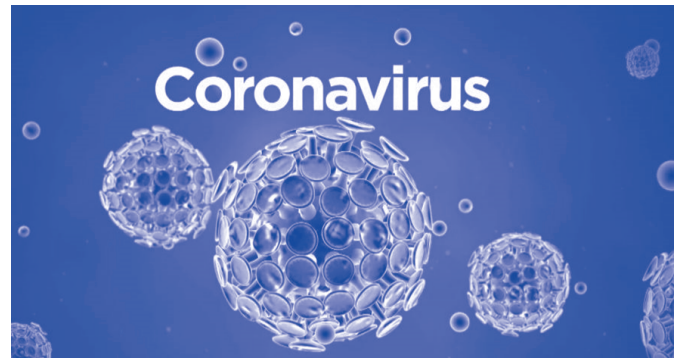
“Thankyou” to Members and Volunteers

While members and volunteers do not expect to be recognised for the contribution they make to the Society’s good works and special works, the Society, nevertheless, wants to acknowledge and celebrate their charitable works as part of National Volunteer Week 2020. The generosity and commitment of members and volunteers is a constant source of inspiration to others in the organisation. This has been particularly true throughout three major challenges the Society has faced in recent times.

First, implementing New Ways of Working changes how the Society supports members and volunteers. This has required members and volunteers to adjust to new ways of working, to think about how their engagement in the works of the Society aligns with the principle of ‘One Society’ and to consider the ways this may impact on the manner in which we support those that we assist.



Second, the Bushfire Emergency, which impacted so directly on the work of the Wollongong Central Council, presented added challenges to members and volunteers. They responded generously to the greater and more immediate demands for assistance of those affected directly and indirectly by the fires. Working as ‘One Society’ together with



support staff, members and volunteers displayed leadership and an outstanding capacity to respond to rapidly changing circumstances.

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic called for members and volunteers to make further adjustments to how they respond to those in need while balancing their own need for self-care and the care of loved-ones. Members and volunteers are invited to, again, be flexible in response to some loosening of social distancing restrictions and to re-engage confidently with their good works in the Wollongong Central Council.

Members and volunteers have continually demonstrated a willingness to remain engaged in the work of the Wollongong Central Council by responding to an ongoing changing environment. They have also done this by contributing to supporting, in practical ways, the good works and special works of the Society.

National Volunteer Week has been an opportunity for the Society to say thankyou to members and volunteers for joining with staff truly as ‘One Society’.

NATIONAL 18-24 MAY 2020
VOLUNTEER
 CHANGING COMMUNITIES. **WEEK**
 CHANGING LIVES.

(Permission of Volunteering Australia)

Extraordinary Letter to Conference Presidents

*"I will not leave you comfortless;
I will come to you" (Jn 14:18).*

The President General of the Council General International of the Society of St Vincent de Paul has issued an Extraordinary Letter to all conference presidents in response to the challenges posed to conference life by COVID-19.

The President General explained that he issued the Extraordinary Letter to conference presidents because they are important leaders in the Society. He acknowledged that conference presidents are most responsible for the proper functioning of their conferences and the faithful observance of the Rule by conference members.

The President General highlighted the fact that all acts of charity by Vincentians give testimony to Christ's love for the world. The reason conference presidents are asked to reflect on this is because they are also responsible for taking care of their own Vincentians.

The President General emphasised the important



*Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
Council General International
16th President General*

responsibility the conference president has for supervising acts of charity by members to those in need of assistance in the community. The



President General also exhorts conference presidents to be mindful of their responsibility to strengthen spiritual bonds and friendship between the members of their own conference. All members can access a copy of the Extraordinary Letter at the following website:

<https://www.ssvpglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Extraordinary-Circular-Letter-ENGLISH-FINAL.pdf>

Vinnies NSW continues to give every member access to the EAP where they can obtain confidential support.

Updates

MAVS Website

Vinnies NSW is developing the MAVS website as a resource to further support members in their conference life and work. Members are strongly encouraged to access the MAVS website as **their first port-of-call** for information on EAPA, NILS, Bushfire Assistance, COVID-19, We Care, Social Justice, Spirituality and conference life. Members can access the website at:

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

Online Training for Members

Currently, members can access Child Safe Familiarisation training through the VLC. Members' contact details must already be stored in Society People. New Code of Conduct training content is currently being developed for live-time training via Zoom.



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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