



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Congratulations to Peter Doris, who has been awarded The 2025 Southern Highlands Community Foundation Highlands Hero!

Good day Members, Volunteers and Staff.

Thank you to all our Member, Volunteers and staff for the great work you do in our Dioceses.

Hard to believe we are in the twilight of 2025. We remember all those who have gone to their eternal place. May they Rest In Peace.

Please take a moment to reflect on all the great work carried out by Members in all the Conferences through the Dioceses. Thanks for you efforts.

As we approach the Season of Advent culminating in the birth of Jesus, we thank Him for the courage and strength to continue to give us as we carry out the Society mission.

May you all have a holy peaceful and safe Christmas. Health and happiness in 2026.

I look forward to working with you all in 2026.

*God bless.
Peter Doris*

Wollongong Central Council President



In this quarterly newsletter you can expect:

- Conference updates
- Pastoral care
- Useful resources
- Member spotlight
- Upcoming events

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SOCIETY INSIGHT FORUMS

We are pleased to invite you to our upcoming Society Insight Forum event in **November**.

Join our CEO, Yolanda Saiz, and her team as we share the Society's progress across major projects, connect and continue the conversation about our direction and impact.

Wollongong Central Council Support Office (WCCSO)
250 Cowper Street, Warrawong

Wednesday, 12th November 2025

2:30PM – 4:30PM

Please RSVP to svdpwollongong@vinnies.org.au or

0491 071 890 by Wednesday, 29th October 2025

Refreshments will be provided.



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Southern Highlands Community Sleepout

This is a first hand report from Bowral Conference member Anthony Patruno who participated in the Southern Highlands Winter Sleepout on Friday 29 August.

Anthony was successful in raising \$2,153 for the Vinnies Southern Highlands Conferences.

The sleepout was a great success in terms of fundraising for me it was not though it was not much of a sleepout for me. It was instead a night out trying to sleep but mainly continuously looking at my watch and counting down the hours to sunrise!



It was very cold on Friday night 29 August with the strong cold winds we had. When I checked my phone at 4am it said the temperature was 1 degree but felt like -8 degrees due to the wind chill. I was fortunate enough to have 3 woollen layers on as well as a ski jacket and a beany (pulled down over my entire face) all on inside my sleeping bag! My drama for the night was that my sleeping bag zipper kept breaking and it wouldn't stay zipped up.

I slept on one of the picnic tables in the school undercover eating area which was good for avoiding the wet ground with the rain we had on the night. But boy those tables are hard!

I have always had an appreciation of having a home and family but appreciate these things all the more now. All while I was out there I was OK despite the discomfort because I know it was just for one night. I know I had a defined certain and real end point. This caused me to reflect deeply on the fact that for homeless people it is not for one night and there is no certainty of when the awful cold, lonely empty and vulnerable nights will end.

I feel that the emotional/psychological stress is much worse than the physical stress of the cold and hard surface.

Will I do it again..... yes, absolutely and I will try to persuade my 14 year old to be there with me next time.

Social Justice Network



We extend our sincere thanks to Tom Gersbach (Camden/Oran Park) for his dedicated service as the Wollongong Social Justice representative since 2016. Over the past nine years, Tom has built a strong network of advocates, campaigned tirelessly in elections, and played a key role in securing a landmark NSW Government investment in social housing.

We congratulate Tom on his new appointment as Chair of the NSW Social Justice Committee, where he will continue to lead state-wide advocacy for a fairer society.

We also warmly welcome Chris Hayes (Ulladulla/Milton) as the new Chair of the Wollongong Central Council Social Justice Network. With his deep political knowledge and passion for justice, we look forward to his leadership in creating meaningful change for those doing it tough in our region.

Remembering Members

We honour the life and service of Elizabeth (Betty) Cotter (1933–2025), a cherished member of the Milton/Ulladulla St Mary Star of the Sea Conference and dedicated retail volunteer for an incredible 35 years.



Sincere condolences are also extended to the family and friends of Patrick O'Flynn, who was an integral Member of the Westmead and Camden Conferences and Regional President for Camden /Wollondilly. Beyond his work with the Society, Pat made significant contributions to his community as a teacher, Deputy Principal, hospital

chaplain, past President and volunteer at Matthew Talbot Hostel, and devoted parishioner and Acolyte at both Westmead and Camden. His legacy of faith and service will live on in all those he inspired.

Visit from Carol Berry MP

Shellharbour Conference was fortunate to have the Federal Member for Whitlam to pay our Office a visit on the 6th of September. We also had the pleasure of Regional President Ken Guernsey, Solange Frost and Veronica from Vinnies in attendance.



Carol was very interested in getting a first-hand knowledge of what Vinnies work entails at the "coal face". Our members who were on duty that day were able to pass on their experiences and share the range of work and people we assist.

Carol also indicated to us at the end of her visit that she would be interested to making a further contribution through her office to Vinnies.

Carol's presence and interest was welcomed by all present.

Brendan Newton - Conference President Shellharbour City Stella Maris Conference



Mission, Spirituality & Pastoral Care

Some of you may already know of this statue.

Homeless Jesus was created by Canadian sculptor, Timothy Schmalz.

We know it's Jesus by the holes in the feet. It's a life-size visual representation of Matthew 25: "Whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me." Australian writer Michael McGirr has described it as a 'sermon in bronze'.

The first Homeless Jesus was installed at the Jesuit-run Regis College at the University of Toronto in 2013. The one in this picture sits in the grounds of Newman College (also a Jesuit-run University residential college) in Melbourne.



There are around 100 copies of the sculpture installed across the world. Locations include the path leading to St Peter's Basilica, Capernaum, New York, Dublin, Singapore, Madrid, Buenos Aires. In Australia, I believe it can be seen at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Townsville, Marist College Canberra and also the Anglican St James Church in Sydney city. There may be others.

I've read that people who are homeless in Washington consider this "their monument". "That's our Vietnam Memorial. That's our Lincoln Memorial. That's our place". They visit it, they touch it, and some say a prayer by it. I feel this creation offers so much to reflect on.

Firstly, the simple question of - how likely would this model be these days? While vagrancy is not against the law, bench dividers have been installed in many public places that prevent people from lying to rest. Even where a person can stretch out, how safe are they? Attitudes to homelessness amongst the non-homeless community remain, for the most part, unenlightened.

Secondly, I've read that some dioceses declined the offer of a statue due to its 'confronting nature'. I guess those dioceses missed Pope Francis memo that contained this quote: "The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle".

Most poignantly though, I think, is the significance of the space available to sit next to "Homeless Jesus" on His bench. It seems we have been invited to join Him on His bench and to sit next to His crucified feet.

How might it change us to sit next to these feet and ponder homelessness for a while?

How many people would?

If it were not a sculpture.

Leonie Duck | Mission, Spirituality & Pastoral Care Partner - South

Festival Mass

The Wollongong Central Council's Annual Festival Mass was held on Sunday, 21 September at Wollongong Cathedral, celebrating the mission of the Society and bringing together members and staff in faith and fellowship.

It was a special occasion, made even more meaningful by the presentation of a Lifetime Service Award to Anna Leschnik, and a Papal Blessing awarded to Malcolm Inskip in recognition of his outstanding service.



Useful resources

Blue Knot: Supporting Recovery from Complex Trauma

Blue Knot is Australia's leading authority on complex trauma. They advocate for and support adults who have experienced complex trauma, as well as the professionals and loved ones who care for them. Their mission is to empower individuals to heal, recover, and build resilience.

What is Complex Trauma? Complex trauma refers to the lasting impact of repeated or prolonged exposure to harmful experiences. These can occur at any stage of life – from childhood through to old age – and may include violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or the absence of a caring, protective adult.

These experiences often have deep and long-lasting effects, but recovery is absolutely possible. Many people not only heal, but also go on to develop extraordinary resilience and personal growth.

Support is Available Blue Knot offers a free national helpline for anyone impacted by complex trauma. Call 1300 657 380 or email helpline@blueknot.org.au - available 9am–5pm, 7 days a week, including public holidays. Explore resources, training, and professional development opportunities at www.blueknot.org.au

Training

In addition to completing your mandatory compliance training, the Members and Volunteers (MAVS) Hub offers a wide range of resources to support you in your Conference work.

You can access optional courses, like the 30-minute Feedback and Complaints Management training, which explains the Society's policy and how to handle feedback effectively.

To explore these resources and more, visit www.mavs.vinnies.org.au

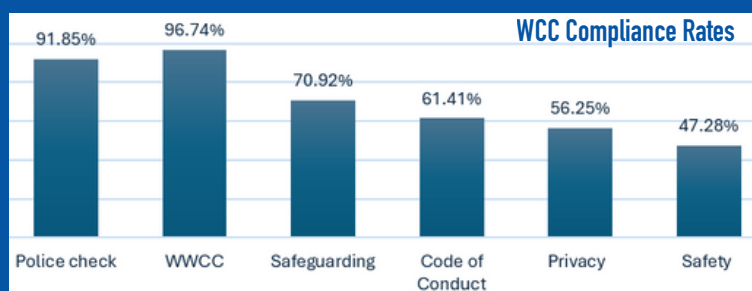
Member Support Days

The 2025 Member Support Days are underway! Come along to meet your South Region Support Staff, get in person help with MAVS, CAMS, IT, compliance checks and more - as well as catch up with fellow Members.

Join us in Unanderra, Mittagong or Campbelltown in the coming weeks.

Upcoming events

- 11 Oct Good Works Summit
- 12-18 Oct Anti Poverty Week
- 15 Oct Member Support Day - Central Illawarra
- 16 Oct Rosalie Rendu Forum
- 30 Oct Member Support Day - Southern Highlands
- 10 Nov Member Support Day - Campbelltown
- 12 Nov Society Insight Forum - Warrawong
- 25 Dec Christmas



Rosalie Rendu Forum



ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW
**ROSALIE RENDU
FORUM 2025**



Advocacy is central to our mission—helping to identify and challenge the structural injustices that lead to poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. At the heart of this work is the power of raising our voices in the name of social justice.

Held each year during Anti-Poverty Week, the Rosalie Rendu Forum is an important event hosted by the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. It brings together a panel of thought leaders and advocates to explore and discuss the most pressing social justice issues of our time.

Register at www.nsw.vinnies.org.au/RRF2025 to join the event virtually or join our local gathering to watch the event with staff and Members at the Wollongong Central Council Support Office - RSVP 0429 656 886 or email nat.nicastri@vinnies.org.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May the Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured.
May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.