



St Vincent de Paul Society

NSW

good works



Vinnies Newsletter
Christmas Edition – 2023
North West Region

Merry Christmas Everyone

Hi Everyone,

It has been a HUGE year for the Society generally and Members particularly.

Increasing cost of living pressures as well as high rents have seen an increase in requests for help with most conferences now seeing 20% more people and distributing 25% more assistance than the same time last year. As well as this we have still been helping people with flood assistance at Eugowra and other townships impacted a year ago. This also contrasts with the drought conditions already significant in places and the increase in drought assistance indicating that next year will see increased demand in this regard.

A significant change this year was the introduction of CAMS as a state wide client database. The benefits being everyone now has state wide visibility of clients and improved information for grants and funding. It has taken some time for many of you to get familiar with the system and I thank you for your perseverance and patience.

The Society has seen a number of successes in the North West in 2023 and I summarise a few below:

- Reintroducing EAPA to a number of sites. The process has been significantly improved and members using the system are reporting ease of use.
- Financial Literacy training in Armidale through TAFE with several members now able to offer budget assistance.
- The creation of the First Nation Guniinii Conference in Moree. The conference held a Community Day in December that was attended by nearly 400 people.
- NAIDOC Week Teams broadcast with Inverell elder Uncle Kelvin Brown to discuss the roles of elders in First Nation communities.
- Implementation of CAMS across Armidale in March and then Bathurst in May to finalise rollout of the system across NSW.

Thank you everyone for your wonderful efforts this year to help those in need and ease the suffering for many in the communities we are in. In helping each person we then help their family and in turn their neighbourhood. May you all have a wonderful and restful break, a blessed Christmas with family and friends and safe travels. Take care and looking forward to seeing you in 2024.

Yours faithfully - Phil Donnan (Regional Director - North West)

News from around the Armidale Central Council

Dear Members, Volunteers and Staff,

Well, the end of another busy year, is fast approaching. This year has seen some changes within the Armidale Central Council area. We have seen some staff changes within the Armidale Central Office, we farewelled Ahmed Adnegi and Matthew Knights and recently we have welcomed both Joy Howe and Nirmal Nanayakkara as new staff members. Joy has been with the society previously and many members and volunteers remember Joy in her previous role and is now the Operational Support Officer. I am also grateful that Nirmal's position as Member and Community Engagement Coordinator has been upgraded to full time.

This year was tinged with sadness as we made the decision to close the Warialda shop. It is not an easy decision for any Central Council President to close a shop however this decision was based on a number of factors. During the farewell lunch we celebrated some 550 years of volunteering from the Warialda community. The Inverell conference now attends to any needs within the Warialda area.

The new first nations conferences continue to evolve in both Walgett and Moree. It is planned to have a visit to Walgett, as well as a community day in Moree on the 10 December.

The community sleepouts proved a great success this year held at both Tamworth and Armidale with some \$37,000 being raised.

I offer my sincere thanks to Phil Donnan, Regional Director, all our staff, members and volunteers for your amazing work during 2023. I fear that the coming year will be a challenging year for the society.

I wish one and all a very happy, holy and special Christmas season and my prayer for you all is a very happy and rewarding 2024.

God Bless

John Addams - Armidale Central Council President

Armidale Region - President Kerry Steller

Hello everyone

What an amazing team we have with the Conferences in Armidale Regional Council. It has been a busy year with so much support from the community. As we finish up the year, I wish to thank all of our wonderful workers and I pray that we may help to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve. We are reminded by Frederic Ozanam to "*Let us do without hesitation whatever lies in our hands.*"

In September we held a Diocesan Festival Mass in Armidale with the induction of Presidents Michael Barry (St Augustine's conference), Veronica Ryan (St Louise Care and Support Conference) and Sue Adams (St Mary of the Angels Conference Guyra). It was great to have around 30 Vincentians join us for this celebration of our faith.

In August we participated in the Vinnies Community Sleepout where over \$30,000 was raised for the Fresh Start Program at Freeman House. We had twenty people brave the cold at the Bundarra Rd Distribution Centre to raise these much-needed funds.



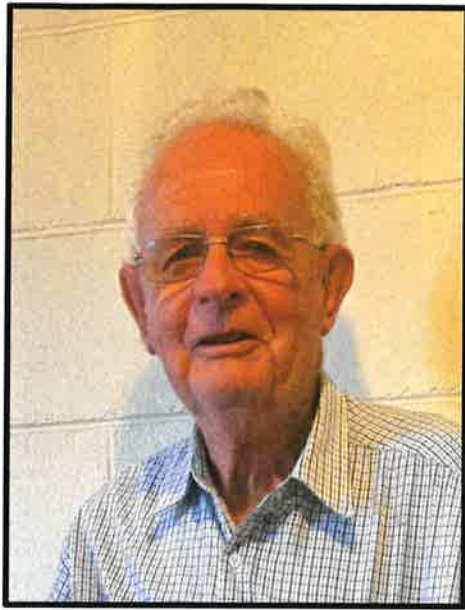
The rough sleepers warm themselves at the fire to fight off the cold on the night. The Rapid Response Team generously provided the dinner and breakfast for the 20 participants who slept out. Major sponsors were Armidale Ex-Services club, Armidale Rotary Club and ADIG.



Photo right: The weary John Adams (Central Council President) with David Steller and Paul Robinson from St Augustine's Conference, the morning after the sleepout.

December was well supported at our Armidale Volunteer Appreciation lunch, where 91 volunteers, members and their partners enjoyed a meal at the Railway Hotel.

Pat Curry (pictured below) was awarded with a Lifetime award for his contribution to Vinnies as he has volunteered well over 25 years, looking after the finances in the Rusden St store.



The Armidale Country Women's Association took Freeman House under its wing as they gathered Christmas Hamper items for outreach clients of Freeman House when they attended Coffee and Cake on 14th December. The goods have been greatly appreciated and have already been distributed to our grateful clients.

Picture right: are CWA representatives with our current Freeman House manager Elodie Drutt (back left) and new manager Jessica Toole (back right).



Oaktree Over 55's Village chose the St Vincent de Paul society as their charity where they had a 'Giving Tree' in Armidale Central Shopping Centre and they approached local businesses to provide amazing gifts, food and vouchers for Vinnies to distribute to those in need this Christmas. The manager and staff of Oaktree Village presented gifts to Kerry Steller, Phil Donnan and Ronnie Ryan from St Vincent de Paul on behalf of their residents.



Some of the residents of Freeman House cook Christmas treats with Liz Fitzgerald from St Augustine's Conference for their upcoming Christmas Party. Many who stay in Freeman House over the Christmas period are kept busy with outings and gatherings while their programs are on hold.

Merry Christmas to all
Kindest regards Kerry



Tamworth Region - President Jann Browne

In December the Quirindi Conference accepted gift donations from the Ray White Real Estate 'Little Ray of Giving' promotion.

Photo left: Bevan Lewis, President and member Pat Perkins from St Joseph's Conference Quirindi.

Ray White Real Estate Tamworth also donated monies from their 'Little Ray of Giving' promotion to St Louise Care & Support Conference in Tamworth.



Photo right: L to R - Bec Saunders (Ray White) & Jann Browne (Tamworth Regional President)

Photo left: Paul Crayn (President of St Marie Therese Conference) thanking Peter Summers (Manager IGA Kootingal) for their continued support at the local Conference level of the Society through the sale of the \$2 Bauble Christmas Appeal.



The ladies from the CWA Group in Kootingal made a very generous donation to St Marie Therese Conference for the Christmas Appeal.

Accepting the donation - photo right: Paul Crayn (President St Marie Therese Conference Kootingal).



Photo left: Cheryl Backhouse, Jann Browne (Tamworth Regional President), Fr Christopher Onuekwusi, Bevan Lewis & Jennifer Burton

On the 19th November a festival mass was held at St Nicholas's Church in Tamworth which included the commissioning of Cheryl Backhouse (St Patrick's Conference Sth Tamworth), Bevan Lewis (President St Joseph's Conference Quirindi) & Jennifer Burton (President St Louise Care & Support Tamworth). Following the mass a workshop was held for the Tamworth Conferences "How can Tamworth Conferences improve/enhance what we do"

The Quirindi store (photo right) relocated to a larger and better premises on the main street and was officially opened on Friday 06 October.

Wishing you all a happy and holy Christmas
Kind regards
Jann



Moree Community Day



The Guniinii Moree conference held a Community Healing Day in Moree on Sunday 10th December 2023. This was to bring the community together after the referendum No result and to reinvigorate the community spirit and provide hampers leading into Christmas. The Council assisted by discounting pool entry from \$6 per adult to just \$3 and providing the water slide for free when it is normally \$3 per person. The Society covered gate entrance fees making the day free for everyone and also provided a BBQ with sausage sandwiches and a Mungindi burger (white bread, devon, sauce and hot chips), and Christmas hamper items including food, health and care products, baby products and swim/beach wear. Nearly 400 people attended and it was a wonderful gathering of people with more than half being children. Most



attendees were families and a number commenting that they had not been to the pool or had not been recently.

The Society was represented by four of the leadership (Jann, Vince, Nirmal and Phil), Guniinii Conference (Jaki, Polly, Irene, Charlie and Denise) and several helpers.

News from around the Bathurst Central Council

Hi Everyone,

On behalf of the Bathurst Central Council, I wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas and hope your lives are filled with peace during this season and into the future. It has been most encouraging to see conferences engaging with the spirituality revitalisation from the grassroots up. State Council are also working with much enthusiasm to revitalise our spirituality within the organisation.

We extend a huge thank you to all members, volunteers and staff following our mission to support so many people in need throughout the BCC. In the post covid era, having lost many members to retirement and finding very few, if any, new members, you have been stretched beyond your limits. This has been exacerbated by a very large cost of living increase and many more people requesting assistance. You are a wonderful generous group of people who give much of your time and energy for the poor. For the many and varied projects within the BCC that provide other services for people in need or raise funds for our organisation, it is truly recognised. Your efforts, we hope, give you great satisfaction in knowing you have helped the poor. The central council look forward to working with you again in 2024. It is hoped that we will have improvements to CAMS and Vinnies Assist (VA) early next year, so that the systems/processes work better for us in regional areas.

Warm Regards

Pat Yeo

Acting President - Bathurst Central Council

Castlereagh Region - President Ian Wray

Hi Everyone,

On behalf of the Castlereagh Regional Council members, I wish to extend to all members, volunteers, and Bathurst Central Council staff a Happy, Holy, and Joyful Christmas. We look forward to working with you again in 2024.

We would also like to thank you for your wonderful contributions to the people we assist at our respective welfare centres, along with various fund-raising activities.

The region has two new Conference Presidents in Paul Mann at Gilgandra and Rhonda Gleeson at Dubbo. Thank you to both members for stepping-up and welcome to the Castlereagh Regional Council.

I was given the privilege of representing the Bathurst Central Council with our State president and North/West Regional director for the yearly meeting with Bishop Michael of Bathurst diocese. Bishop Michael is most supportive of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and we at the society offered our continued support to him and his brother priests.

Some of our activities etc. for this year are listed below.

- Gilgandra Conference report by President Paul Mann and member Leonie Mann

Membership currently eight with a non-active member returning recently.

It is with much sadness that we report the passing of Merle Morris, a wonderful former member for many years of the Gilgandra conference and shop volunteer. Merle will be missed by many, and we offer our sincere condolences to John her husband and family.

A concerted effort for CAMS training is planned for earlier in the new year, whilst conference is managing with the help from a couple of members who have developed their skills.

- Wellington Conference report from President Peter Duffy

Membership, currently eight with one increase recently. Only four active members doing welfare. Hence a need for another membership drive.

Christmas hampers this year will be in the form of food vouchers. Insufficient active members to canvass for hamper donations. Fund Raising this year was a Country and Western theme show at the Soldier's Club to raise funds for the flood victims. A successful function. It is hoped that a similar function will be held in 2024 for a cause yet to be decided.

- Dubbo conference report by Ian Wray

The Dubbo sleep-out was a remarkable success and raised \$12K+. This achievement was due in part to forging a partnership with the Dubbo City Council, the custodians of the old Dubbo goal museum where the sleepout was held. In addition, plenty of work by Bathurst central council office staff, our regional director for North/West and Castlereagh regional council members. The winter appeal was again successful and raised in excess \$7.5K with more still to come with later banking's from our Catholic school's wonderful support.

The proposed project to use the former St Mary's Catholic Health Care aged care facility as a homeless refuge is being investigated by our state support staff. The project has the full support from our state council president, Paul and Bathurst diocese, Bishop Michael. If successful, the refuge will provide for our entire Castlereagh Region.

The combined Dubbo SVDP conference and St Brigid's Parish Christmas hamper project have received 278 hampers each valued at around \$120 for distribution to people in need.

The Dubbo combined shop and Conference Christmas party was held on Sunday 17th of December at the West-Side Hotel. Around forty attended and they enjoyed their meals and the social get together. At the function Sue Boyne was presented with her 35 years of service certificate. Congratulations Sue, what an amazing achievement!

God Bless

Ian Wray, Castlereagh Regional President

Cudgegong Region - President Brian McCarney & Conference President Carol Jones

Hello to all Conference Members near and far from the Cudgegong Region. Hasn't this last six months rolled around quickly...

The month of June saw Mudgee have their sleepout which raised over \$3,000, plus the winter food drive. Around 1600 cans of food were donated, plus shelf life items for our pantry. All this was



organised and donated by our wonderful students, parents & teachers of St Matthew's School. We are truly blessed with the continued care & Support from St Matthews School. 🙏



Our region is seeing more clients, especially Kandos SVDP welfare.

They see up to 18 clients or more on a Tuesday. Kandos have the Link2 Home accommodation which eases the load for this type of help from Vinnies. This leaves mainly food assistance for vulnerable clients through the conference.

Mudgee Care & Support has increased greatly, especially with Christmas getting closer.

We are blessed with support from our Aldi supermarket. The donations to the conference are fantastic. Meat, vegetables, fruit, bread etc, we rarely need to use grocery cards for our clients. We receive the food twice a week.

Mudgee is also looking after clients needing assistance in Gulgong at present with Care & Support, as the lovely Lorraine Grech (President of St John the Baptist Conference) retired in August. Lorraine & member Paul Mancer also covered Dunedoo. With Lorraine's retirement, Paul also stepped down from his role. This means the conference is closed until we can recruitment some new members to start again.

Happy retirement Lorraine after 12 years of loyal commitment to the Society.

Coolah Conference (Sacred Heart) are covering Dunedoo area now with the help of husband and wife team Peter (President & Judy (Member) Manning. These isolated rural areas are really feeling it hard to recruit members, but this is happening everywhere. Peter & Judy assist our most vulnerable driving many kilometres in some instances to offer food and help with bill payments etc. they are amazing Vincentians.

It is a busy time of year everywhere at present. Mudgee held the annual Toyrun on Saturday the 25th November. The toyrun have supported St Mary's Conference Mudgee for the last 10 years with toys & grocery cards for hampers. We are extremely grateful for the continued support.

CAMS arrived with a bang, some finding it difficult. It seems once again isolated rural areas are struggling with this and the commencement of EAPA in some areas again.

Anyway, we soldier on as good Vincentians, caring for our most vulnerable..

Wishing everyone a blessed, safe and happy Christmas..

Kindest regards

Brian McCarney & Carol Jones

Evans Region - President Denis Kelly

Hi Everyone

A Blurb from around Evans Region - a little of recent goings on.

Lithgow is flat out preparing hampers and Toys for Christmas Distribution.

The Vipers, a group of motorbike riders have been supporting Vinnies for years and they did their annual ride around and got so many beautiful donations and dropped these off to the Conference on Sat 10/12 December. They share their donation between the Vinnies and Salvos - What a wonderful gesture.

LJ Hooker in Lithgow did a gift drive and by Thursday 7th December had already collected an incredible number of gifts to be shared through the St Patricks Lithgow Conference. What a wonderful community minded business.



Wallerawang Conference has been very busy, they recently went and visited the Wallerawang Disability group (photo above) and the 22 residents were given gifts and all enjoyed a sing along and a friendly chat.

They are now preparing hampers and toys to be distributed to families and single people doing it tough for Christmas.

Portland held 2 lunches recently - the Seniors Christmas Lunch and their Disability Lunch. A great time had by all.

Sr Therese Patterson RSJ retired to St Catherine's Aged Care Bathurst in the middle of this year 2023 after many years of dedication to the community of Portland and surrounds.

On a very sad note - Bill Fitzgerald passed recently and had been in the society for over 85 years. Bill had held many positions in his time with the Society including State President. He was active in the parish and instrumental in the Mary O'Leary Special Works. Bill was 98 years. RIP Bill.

Oberon are the quiet achievers. Mary Behan and the members of St Ignatius Conference work (like all members do) tirelessly for the community. They are also very busy this time of year.

Bathurst has been extremely busy this end of the year, along with other activities, they had the Free Grad Dress and suit project. This is where students were able to get a dress free from Community donations, if needed free of charge.

Cooking classes were again a hit - especially the Rocky Road.

The Conference is always out doing BBQ's etc. fundraising for the Bathurst Mobile Food Van - watch this space.

On the 6th December, Marina Gray & Orange Vinnies Van Coordinator Keith Dowling presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Bathurst Cathedral School (Mini Vinnies-photo right), for their exceptional work throughout the year in helping people in need within the Bathurst Community.



My hat is off to all, we have had many achievements this year. The CAMS program, thank you for taking this on board and not throwing the computer out the window. It is frustrating but we are slowly getting there and what a marvellous job you have all done. Remember it's new and it will take time, and if you need help ask. No one wants you frustrated.

EAPA - we are now back on board with EAPA and another option we may be able to offer people that we assist.

I could keep writing of all our achievements, but space prevents me, so please everyone reading this, pat yourself on the back, you are all involved with Vinnies in whatever role you have, and WITHOUT YOU we wouldn't be able to provide the care and support we do.

Have a Merry Christmas
God Bless
Marina

Orange Region - President Chris Worley

Hi everyone



Once again we are at the end of the year and I would like to thank my Region for their hard work. The Conferences had a big year with the increase of clients due to the cost of living also spending time at Eugowra supporting the community with financial support and pastoral care.

I would like to thank Pat Yeo for taking on the Central Council Acting President position, his kindness and support has helped us a great deal.

We have had CAMS for a while now and to say it is hard work is an understatement, I can only say a big thankyou to the office staff, as always they have gone above and beyond to help us manage this program.

A big thank you must go to Catherine McAuley and St Mary's Schools for their amazing donation of food for St Mary & St Joseph conference. These items were given out to clients for Christmas and will also be distributed to many elderly home visit clients within the Orange community. Photo left: Members - Pat Murphy and John Mullen.

Once again James Sheahan High School has excelled in the donation of Christmas toys for the Orange Conference. We thank all these schools immensely for their community spirit.

Many thanks must also go to the Conferences in my region and all the staff that support us in the office. Wishing you all a great Christmas and a very Happy New Year 2023 and be safe during this period. Merry Christmas to all - Chris

Armidale Central Council Schools & Youth Coordinator - Cassie Croft

This year has cumulated in a lot of hard work by the Armidale St Mary's Youth Conference. This year has seen the group thrive, undertaking many new activities to benefit the Armidale community. Our president Sophie Warner has worked with a dedicated group of volunteers throughout the year to set and reach goals for the Conference.

Homework Club

The St Mary's Youth Conference has been busy providing a Homework Club service to local primary school students. This club is held weekly at the Armidale town library. They cater for around 10 students aged between 5 and 10, creating a welcoming and supportive environment to complete homework and get some one on one assistance. The program aims to keep students engaged with the school curriculum and help them reach their educational milestones.



Care Pack Making

Our youth group really enjoyed making care packs for those in the community earlier in the year and decided that they would like to make this activity bi-annual. They achieved their goal by creating another 50 care packs to be used over the Christmas season.

Care packs can include: shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, shower gel, brushes and combs, sanitary items and more.



Buddies Day

In November Christmas came early in Armidale. With the St Mary's Youth Conference undertaking their first 'Buddies Day'. They hosted primary school students at the Vinnies Centre for a fun, hands on day of Christmas craft and activities to get into the Christmas Spirit.

Our volunteers both new and old organized, set up and were amazing role models throughout the day. The day was met with great feedback from caregivers and children asking when the next day would be.

Buddies days aim to provide participants with a positive activity, social inclusion and positive role modelling in order to mitigate vulnerability in children and young people. The aim is to make participants feel as though they are engaged, supported, and are seen as valued members of their community. These activities are provided for the families hence also contributing to the rising cost of living and social isolation of these constraints.





Schools in the Armidale Central Council



I spent some time in Term 3 and 4 travelling around the Central Council visiting schools to promote Mini Vinnies and present hands on workshops with these groups.

Visiting many of the schools around the Armidale Central Council has shown that Vinnie's future is bright with the young Mini Vinnies students we have involved. All groups were engaged and interested in learning about disadvantage in the community and how Vinnies helps. Each workshop ended with a 'call to action' for their Mini Vinnies group to work on for the remainder of the year and into next year. Some of the ideas to action included an RU OK day wellbeing morning, a cake stall to raise funds, creation of a 'buddy bench' for those struggling with friendships at school, a once weekly brekky club, Christmas donation drives and more.

A VERY VINNIES CHRISTMAS

As the year comes to an end, we thank all of the fabulous schools that take part in the Christmas appeal. This year schools have participated in a variety of ways even amongst families within our schools feeling the financial pinch this year. They have raised funds and provided physical items to assist this Christmas Season. Some of the activities undertaken across the Central Council are:

- Christmas themed disco
- Hamper donations
- Free dress days
- Vinnies Christmas Masses
- Food Collection
- Cake stalls
- Lolly guessing jar
- Christmas lucky dip fundraising
- Mini Vinnies Christmas parties
- Gift wrapping
- Coin lines
- Talent Quest

As the year wraps up, if conferences could get in touch with me to let me know of any physical or financial donations that schools have given in the Christmas appeal that would greatly help our admin requirements!

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas
Regards Cassie

Bathurst Central Council Schools & Youth Coordinator - Kim Colbourne

Hi Everyone,

I'd like to begin with a small school with a big heart. St Michael's Dunedoo has only forty four students, yet not only did they manage to collect four washing tubs full of food for our appeal, but Year Six student Lily has had her artwork selected as one of the five winners of our statewide Christmas Card Appeal! Lily describes the inspiration of her artwork below:

"My artwork is inspired by the passage in Matthew. My appliqué artwork is a baby Jesus's view as he looked up. Above him was the star, embroidered with beads, which was God's love leading to him. Around him was his circle of life - the people who would guide him through his life."

Lily's art piece will be on members' Christmas cards in 2024. It has also won the Dean's Award in the Bathurst Diocese Christmas Art Competition, and will feature on the Bathurst Chancery's Mission and Renewal Team's Christmas Cards. It's wonderful to see an inspired art piece from a student in a smaller school receive the attention and admiration it deserves.



Our older schools have been generous as well. Mackillop College Bathurst held its annual fundraiser, where each year group bought a specific donation for their Christmas hampers; the students bought in hundreds of toys and food items. La Salle Academy Lithgow similarly held a toy drive (and did a fantastic promotional video) to assist the toy hampers of St Patrick's conference. James Sheahan Orange also gave generously as did St Matthews Mudgee towards the Christmas Appeal. On the 13th of November, St Stanislaus's College invited Vincentians as special guests to their Feast Day Mass, which was a beautiful occasion for all who attended.



The Orange Vinnies van has made several visits to schools. St Mary's Orange Mini Vinnies began the snack pack making, so the children - the largest group of people to come to the van on its rounds - will have something to take to school the next day which is comparable to their peers. This idea was enthusiastically taken up by the Mini Vinnies in Cathedral School Bathurst, who presented their donations to the conference president of St Therese, Marina Gray, and Van Coordinator Keith Dowling recently.

As you can see from the picture right, the number of snack packs was extraordinary:

So too was the effort of St Laurence's Primary School in Dubbo. This is a school which hasn't stopped working for others all year. It was a privilege to attend their last donation presentation along with Regional President Ian Wray.

The Daily Liberal also sent a photographer, and featured an article available here:

<https://www.dailyliberal.com.au/story/8435844/st-laurences-primary-dubbo-students-donate-to-st-vincent-de-paul/>. St Joseph's Oberon - a school with just over one hundred students - was another school that did an amazing job, raising \$1330 to assist with Christmas hampers.

Schools never cease to be generous and caring for those in the community who are in need; it is very encouraging to see the interest and willingness in students' eyes when they understand they have the power to help the people we serve.



Our older youth conference, Bowenfels, is growing; four new members are being onboarded in Dubbo, where they will assist with CAMS entry for the St Brigids conference and learn about Care and Support. In Lithgow, the members took part in the Free Family Fun Day organised by Centacare; the day (pictured left) was a terrific success, with over a thousand people in attendance. We fed over four hundred people! Naturally the Tim Tams melted in the sun, and there was clearly not enough fairy bread. We are about to host a Christmas Cards and Craft Day in conjunction with Lithgow Library this Friday; the members are starting to put forward ideas to engage the community with the Vincentian spirit. Please keep them in your prayers as you enjoy a well earned Christmas break.

Merry Christmas
Kind regards - Kim

Vinnies Van Support Coordinator - Keith Dowling

Hello everyone

As of November, I celebrated my first 12 months in the roll as coordinator of the service and I'm pleased to say that I've enjoyed that small milestone and eagerly look forward to the next year.

Some statistics to start with; by the end of this year, Vinnies Van Service will have supported over 2,000 individuals with food distribution, 63% of whom were young families with children.

The Orange Vinnies Van—Community Sleepout

was held on August 25 and was a successful event in raising awareness of the homelessness issues in our community. We were supported by local agencies including Orange City Council, Orange Youth Hub, Housing Plus, Dept of Community and Justice, Veritas House and a special thank you to Uniting Church, who hosted the day/night in their grounds. We had 19 participants who raised over \$3,000 from their sponsors and generous donations from Rotary Clubs of Orange and North Orange, contributing in combination \$3,000—local businesses also supported the event with Nile Street Café providing soup and bread rolls for dinner and the Rapid Relief Team serving up a hearty breakfast. Councillors David Mallard & Gerald Power attended in the afternoon along with Andrew Gee. The organising committee are keen to hold it again next year.



Community Expo: The Van had a presence at the Central West Community Services Expo held at the PCYC on 6th September. It was an opportunity to network with other service providers and exposure with the community.



Torpy Street Event: In collaboration with Dept. of Community and Justice, the Van and a couple of volunteers held a "Get to Know You" afternoon for 2 hours on 14th September for the tenants. We assisted 18 people with food and personal care items as well as bedding and kitchen utensils with the help from Mel at the Warehouse. A number of these new tenants have been further assisted through Conference Care and Support.

Food Handling Training: It has been a while since we've had training around Food Safety essentials, so a refresher of **Hygienic Practices for Food Safety** course was held in October for our food preparation crew it was also an opportunity for recent and existing volunteers to be in unison with these objectives.

Sausage Sizzle Event: As part of our regular recruiting efforts, we will hold a free sausage sizzle awareness campaign at Ashcroft's Peisley Street IGA in October. This event was an opportunity to thank our sponsors and importantly capture community members who express an interest in volunteering with the van. As a result of exposure through the Orange City Life magazine, I've had 20 enquiries leading to membership applications.

Van Visits: I've had some great support from Kim Colbourne (School and Youth Engagement) who has been liaising with schools and coordinating van visits in Bathurst, and Marina Gray (President St Therese Conference Bathurst) in preparation for the Bathurst Vinnies Van establishment there.

I also thank all my wonderful colleagues for the support you've shown me throughout my inaugural year – it bolsters my confidence immensely. Have a joyful festive season everyone!

Merry Christmas to all
Kind regards Keith



Member & Community Engagement Coordinator - Gab McDonell (North West)

Hi everyone

During the past couple of months since I started working at St Vincent de Paul, I have been busy getting to know the Society, my role as Member & Community Engagement Coordinator, sitting in with Conference members and clients, and enjoying getting to know my lovely work colleagues and members in the Orange office, Conferences and the North West Regions.

I have completed a number of informative courses which has given me clearer understanding of the society, working with our clients, members and volunteers. I have been visiting the North West regional towns and getting to know the members individually and the amazing work they do with the clients. I enjoy supporting our regional presidents and members with CAMS. I have visited our office in Kandos, Cowra and Canowindra to assist with the CAMS & EAPA training with Operations Support Officer Denise Martin who has been training me in her previous role.



Attending the Warrumbungle Community Expo was a great experience and opportunity to communicate, network and become familiar with the wonderful, services which are in the Coonabarabran township. As well as introduce ourselves from St Vincent de Paul and talk individually to people going through hard times, and emphasise the importance of what the conference is about and becoming a member in conference or volunteer in the retail shop.

Recently after an invitation from St Stanislaus in Bathurst, St Vincent de Paul we were invited to attend the Feast of St Stanislaus Koska and St Vincent de Paul. The mass was a lovely service with readings projecting our role as Vincentians within our regions and communities from past and present. The boys choir sang beautiful hymns which we (members, volunteers and employees) all greatly appreciated. I love to meet new people from all walks of life and ages I feel it will be of benefit to continue to be out in the community meeting our members, volunteers and the greater community to help, support and educate giving, caring and a hand up to those in need.

Thank you to all for making me feel so welcome. I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a very happy New Year. I look forward to working with you all again in the New Year.

Regards
Gab



Central Council Offices Christmas Closing and Re-opening dates for 2024

Armidale

Closing - Friday, 22nd December 2023
Re-opening - Tuesday, 2nd January 2024

Bathurst

Closing - Friday, 22nd December 2023
Re-opening - Tuesday, 2nd January 2024

The Office staff of the North West Region would like to once again wish all our wonderful and hardworking Members and Volunteers a very happy and joyous Christmas with your family and friends and a very happy, healthy and safe New Year 2024.

May God Bless you all this coming year as you continue to do his work as Vincentians.

