



THE SVdP NORTHERN NEWS
LISMORE & MAITLAND/NEWCASTLE CENTRAL COUNCILS

January 2021

MESSAGE FROM NORTH EAST REGIONAL DIRECTOR CLARE VAN DOORN



Welcome to the inaugural edition of The SVdP Northern News, a monthly email keeping you up to date with your Central Council news, events, and stories. Please feel welcome to send through any stories and photographs which you'd like to share with your fellow Vincentians. It is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the "Good Works" that happen every day in our region. Enjoy the first edition!

**MESSAGE FROM LISMORE CENTRAL
COUNCIL PRESIDENT
GAIL GAUDRON**



Welcome Vincentians, I trust 2021 has begun well and is treating you well. 2020 has created great changes in our work as Vincentians, well done on our members, volunteers, and staff and their ability to change and adapt when needed, and your patience in these trying times. Thank you.

I look forward to 2021 where we can really start to build some good plans to rejuvenate and grow our membership, Conference Involvement supporting Special Works and Youth. Frederic Ozanam wanted to create a network of Charity, and when I see our members, volunteers and staff throughout the Lismore and Maitland/Newcastle Regions I am just amazed at what has been achieved in service of the poor, and in a community of faith.

I trust we approach 2021 with the vigor and graces we know we enjoyed as Vincentians before 2020. Thank you for your support.

**MESSAGE FROM MAITLAND/NEWCASTLE
CENTRAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT
JOHN MCKENDRY**



I am so pleased to see a new newsletter.

All of us in Maitland/Newcastle have missed having a quality edition of The Beacon or Monday Memo but now that Clare has some much-needed support on board, I'm sure we will be able to rely on regularly receiving a bright, interesting, and informative "The SVdP Northern News".

Happy New Year to all!

My New Year's wish is that we see the re-establishment of face to face contact within our Conferences and especially with our clients

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

Our Lady of the Rosary



Our Lady of the Rosary Alstonville Conference members assembling Christmas Hampers from items donated by families of St Joseph's Primary School. Photograph supplied by Anne Kenny, member of Our Lady of the Rosary Conference.

St Mary's Grafton

St Mary's Conference in Grafton distributed over 40 Christmas hampers donated from local schools including McAuley Catholic College, St Mary's Primary School and St Joseph's Primary School. Photograph supplied by Barry Walley, member of St Mary's Conference Grafton.



St Francis Xavier Ballina

Students and Staff from Holy Family Catholic Primary Skennars Head donated hampers to the St Francis Xavier Conference in Ballina.



St Vincent de Paul Representatives Mick Albany (Richmond Regional President) and Madeline Pride (St Francis Xavier Conference member)

together with staff and students from Holy Family Catholic Primary.
St Joseph's Merewether



Mini-Vinnies members Sasha and Leila from St Joseph's Primary Merewether with hampers donated to Holy Family Conference Merewether Beach.

St Joseph's Toronto

St Joseph's Toronto Conference members distributed 80 Christmas Hampers to families in need thanks to the very generous St Joseph's Primary Kilaben Bay community.



Maitland/Newcastle Office



The abundant donations from numerous local businesses and organisations in the Hunter including The Mater Hospital and Active Accounting.

OPERATION BACKPACK

In the lead-up to first term 2021, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Lismore Shopping Square partnered to help families with primary and high school aged children receive essential back-to-school supplies.

In previous years shoppers donated backpacks and stationery items, however due to COVID-19, shoppers were asked to make financial donations for the purchase of school supplies such as stationery, uniforms, and backpacks.



Gail Gaudron, Pauline Buckland (front) and Maria Miller (centre) from St Carthage's Conference joined Lismore Shopping Square staff Steve and Sarah, and Lismore Deputy Mayor Neil Marks for the launch of Operation Backpack on 6 January 2021.

Click on the link below to see the fantastic local NBN story story!
<https://www.nbnnews.com.au/2021/01/06/lismores-operation-backpack-returns-as-cost-of-school-basics-climbs/>

Pauline and Maria represented St Vincent de Paul with aplomb! A heartfelt thank you to these two beautiful Vincentians.

A total of **\$2,713.45** was raised by the generous people of Lismore and surrounds.



Pauline Celich and John Kelly of St Carthage's

Conference members from Lismore's St Carthage's and Alstonville's Our Lady of the Rosary are using the funds to pay for uniforms, shoes and other essentials for children from families in need.

RENDU APARTMENTS OPENING

On 19 January 2021, NSW Minister for Families Hon. Gareth Ward joined Lake Macquarie MP Greg Piper, Bishop Bill Wright, Leo Tucker, John McKendry and Jack de Groot in the unveiling of the new Rendu Apartments in Cardiff.

These apartments are the largest complex to date in the SAHF project with 94 apartments in the complex. Guests were lucky for the rain to hold off for the event which saw a mixture of staff, members, VIPs, and tenants attend and have the honour of taking part in a traditional indigenous smoking ceremony. Followed by a blessing from Bishop Bill and Leo Tucker.

Prior to the opening, Toronto Conference members advocated tirelessly to secure tenancy and provide dignity comfort and hope to Chloe who attended the day. Chloe is the first successful applicant of the complex and was able to take her pick of the units to suit her small growing family.

She could not express her gratitude enough and agreed that this would be a life changing opportunity with the wrap around support and security of a long term home for her and her children.



Left: Paul Gleeson, Anne Elward, John McKendry, Jen & David Keegan, Kiara, Chloe, Alf Sierzega, Clare Van Doorn, Mike Perkins, Brian Halligan, Cathy Waugh, Sr Carmel Hanson and Carol O'Brien.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Michelle Kot (Schools & Youth Engagement Officer- M/N) and Sarah Kemp (Manager Member & Community Engagement- North East) have attended Maitland/Newcastle regional council meetings recently to generate discussion around innovative recruitment of under 40 year olds and exciting flexible roles we can develop for this missing cohort. The conversations of been great and will be shared in future Friday News. As The Rule says: "Young people keep the Society young".

Across the North East we would love to profile the great works of Parish conferences and Mini-Vinnies/high school groups coming together. With Rosetta Leo working with schools in Lismore, we envision a space where conference members can share how they engage with schools and inspire each other to take that first step, to create these invaluable connections if they're not currently there for your conference.

We're dreaming of a network that is accessible for all and may begin online as an extension of this newsletter then hopefully once restrictions ease, meet face-to-face. Stay tuned for this.

McAuley Catholic College Grafton

An example of a conference working with their local school is the great collaboration between St Mary's Conference in Grafton, and McAuley Catholic College.

The association between St Mary's Conference Grafton and McAuley Catholic College commenced in 2015 when a student approached President Barry Whalley following the conference canvassing new members through the Parish Bulletin.

At the time there were no local charities or agencies open between Thursdays and Mondays. Barry saw an opportunity for students to become involved with conference, and for assistance to

be provided on Saturdays, by conducting interviews on Saturday mornings.

Barry visited McAuley Catholic College giving introductory and information sharing talks.

When a number of students indicated a willingness to join, Barry gave a 'Welcome Friends' session. Ongoing talks were given to senior students.



Photo of the original students.

Some young members began assisting on Mondays and Thursdays during school holidays. Each young member is active in client interviews: from sitting in "the chair" to recording, taking telephone calls, and completing computer work. From a core group of 18 students, the cohort has grown to over 20 students per year.

Other school-based members currently include 12 staff, 2 students and 2 past students.

St Mary's Conference has only been able to continue their Saturday interviews because of the support of these young members.

Since the restrictions of COVID have impacted the interview process, the students continue to be as active as the older members.



Students witness and value the link between fundraising for Project Compassion, Caritas and the Winter Appeal (including a sleepout) and the need in their own backyard. Social Justice is

integral to the charism of the school and the Religious Education Curriculum.

The students' involvement with the Society is a real-life experience for the students which they can connect with and become engaged in Social Justice issues.



Yearly SVdP events at the school involve Christmas Hampers, Winter Appeal and Sleep-out, weekly Community BBQ (postponed during the pandemic) and replaced with cook-ups for ready-made meals.



The students have held Buddies Days. The students are looking at other initiatives.



The students have hospitality at heart, banding together to prepare meals for the families of fellow students affected by the bushfires. In the lead up to Christmas, they held a big cook-up to distribute meals to struggling locals and help

make sure everyone has access to food over the holidays.



McAuley Catholic College Hospitality students prepping Christmas meals for those in need.

Our young generation is more aware of Social Justice issues of today's world than when I was their age (I am 57). With social media, they have no choice!

Making sense of it all is a big issue for the young. Linking it to the work of SVdP and the wider church is a challenge. Our initiative makes this link in the most proactive and engaging way.

It also gives a 'real' connection to the parish for engaged and disengaged families of the school. The students, can and do, make the connection with Vinnies and Social Justice and able to 'walk the walk' of Social Justice concerns.

It has made a deep impact on the lives of the students and, has manifested into Social Justice work of our parish school in real terms.

Tom Howard
SVdP Coordinator (School Bailly)
McAuley Catholic College
Grafton

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Currently, Vinnies NSW social justice work focuses on:

- Housing and homelessness
- The cost of living
- Refugees and people seeking asylum
- Mental health and wellbeing

LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Gabi Curwood is the Social Justice Representative for Lismore Central Council. Gabi and Rosie, our Member & Community Engagement Coordinator, will be forming a Social Justice Network for Lismore.

If you are interested in joining the Network, please contact either Gabi (CONFERENCE.LIS06474@vinnies.org.au) or Rosie (rosetta.leo@vinnies.org.au).

The Vinnies Social Justice Network is a community of people committed to building a more just and compassionate NSW.

MAITLAND/NEWCASTLE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Sr Carmel Hanson is the Social Justice Representative for Maitland/Newcastle Central Council and SVdP currently focusing on the need for more Social Housing. The latest government figures show 46,000 general social housing applicants in NSW and a further 5,300 listed as priority up to the end of June 2020. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has called on the State Government to build an additional 5,000 new social housing properties each year for the next decade to address the current social housing waitlist. We will be canvassing all our local MPs to seek their support in this vital issue. If you would like to get involved in any of our social justice activities, please contact Sr Carmel (carmel.hanson@vinnies.org.au)

SPIRITUALITY



LEARNING



Pam Lingwood, Conference Member of St Augustine's in Coffs Harbour, celebrating the completion of her online Code of Conduct and Child Familiarisation courses on the Vinnies Learning Centre (VLC).

CODE OF CONDUCT

As members we continue the good works started by Frederic Ozanam nearly two centuries ago. Like Frederic and his companions, we are guided by our Christian values and the inspiration of St Vincent de Paul. As a lay Catholic organization, our good works are based on an enriching heritage of living our Christian faith in service of others. The Society's Code of Conduct is informed by our Mission, Vision, Aspiration and Key Values.

CHILD FAMILIARISATION

Safeguarding children and young people so that they thrive in their families and communities is a fundamental aspect of our work in providing a hand up to those facing diversity.

If members prefer not to complete their Code of Conduct and Child Familiarisation Training online, we are offering face to face learning across the areas. Stay tuned for dates and times. 😊

MAITLAND/NEWCASTLE CENTRAL COUNCIL

In regard to Working With Children Checks and Police Checks – most members have been contacted via letter if they are due to renew their WWCC and/or National Crime Check.

Members are encouraged to contact Sarah (sarah.kemp@vinnies.org.au) to make alternative arrangements to complete the checks if the online format is not an option.

GROWING OUR SOCIETY

Are you constantly thinking of new ways to grow our Society?



**Brian Whelan of the St Carthage's Conference
Lismore**

Do you wish there were more Vincentians in the world?

Shortly you will receive some posters to put up in your church.

In conjunction with this, here are some ideas you can use now:

1. Parish Bulletin insert

“Become a St Vincent de Paul member and make a difference in your community. The Society has been supporting Australians doing it tough since 1854. We are here to offer a ‘hand up’ to people

in their time of need. Our members volunteer through local groups called Conferences and provide support with food, clothing, financial aid, companionship, connection, referral onto other services, raising funds and advocating for social justice issues. We welcome anyone who shares our spirit of community service, believes in compassion and justice, and wants to help people. Please ring [xxxxx] or email [xxxxxxx].”

2. Permanent Parish Bulletin insert

Consider asking your Parish Priest for a permanent spot on the Parish Bulletin: -

Local St Vincent de Paul Conference -[name of your Conference]

Contact: [name of your President or person willing to be the contact person]

Email: [conference email address]

Phone: [conference mobile number if there is someone who monitors it].

3. Pulpit Talk.

“Good morning/evening, I am XXXXX from St XXXX’s Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, here in XXXX.

I am sure that everyone at this Mass today has heard of the Society, often referred to in a shorthand way as ‘Vinnies’. The Society’s mission states: “The Society of St Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society”. It is a challenging mission, but in attempting to achieve this mission we Vincentians have experience great satisfaction, and yes often joy.

Here in XXXX we have XXXX active conferences. A Conference is a group of members who meet at agreed times and undertake assigned tasks. We also [describe any other activities your Conference takes part in, such as running the local shop etc.].

Many of you have already generously supported the works of the Society by contributing to our fundraising appeals or donating quality goods that could be sold or passed on to people in need.

Thank you. Your generosity has enabled us to support individuals and families at very difficult times in their lives...to give them a hand up when it is needed most. But while the work of the Society is often highlighted at times of natural disaster such as drought, bushfire or flood, it is the on-going, everyday work of helping people who are experiencing unemployment, homelessness, domestic violence, economic hardship, illness, addiction or family breakdown that is a challenge for us in the Society.

In addition to these challenges, we have a growing number of people in our community, often those who are aged, or infirm, or who are lonely, and who really appreciate having a caring person visit and spend some time with them.

Like our Church's clergy, our members are ageing, and the Society needs new people - Vincentians with enthusiasm and new ideas to continue our good works. We Vincentians come from a variety of backgrounds and bring a range of talents to our roles. And in my experience, every Vincentian has brought their own special skills to make a difference in the lives of those we seek to help.

Perhaps you could do the same as a Conference Member, or a volunteer working in our shops...or even in a special role where you see a need in the community? We know that there are many demands on our time, especially those who are parents of young children, families where both parents have employment responsibilities, even grandparents whose children or grandchildren live away and who appreciate regular visits. The Society has become more flexible in requiring a level of commitment from its members and volunteers, and so is keen to find ways in which those wishing to join can become involved and their personal contribution welcomed and appreciated.

So, if you think you have the time, (I am sure you all have special skills and talents to offer) please speak to myself or my fellow Vincentian XXXX, after Mass. You may also know of a friend or family members who may be interested in getting involved and if so, please let us know, or speak to them about the Society. We will be conducting a

short information session in the coming weeks or so, during which you can find out more about our work in XXXX and meet some of our current members and volunteers.

Thank you for your attention and thank you Father/Bishop for the opportunity to speak today."

4. Personally invite someone you think would make a great Vincentian.



Shirley Murphy, President St Mary's Conference Casino talking to fellow parishioner Don about the essential work Vincentians do and inviting him to join the Conference. Don has decided to become a Member of the St Mary's Conference in Casino

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

**Central Council Youth Representative-
Maitland/Newcastle**

Is there an enthusiastic young person aged 17-35 years in your conference that you see real leadership potential in?

We are looking for a young person who is familiar with the Society, has good organization and interpersonal skills and is interested in representing young people across the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council. Please contact Michelle on (02) 40323560 or michelle.kot@vinnies.org.au for more information.

HOUSEKEEPING

LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Would Conference Presidents send all Member Update Forms to rosetta.leo@vinnies.org.au or 84B Magellan Street LISMORE 2480 😊

“Ozanam himself once said that he would usually be inspired to visit poor people ‘on a day when I am in bad humour, which makes me come away from them feeling quite humiliated at my imaginary miseries in the light of the awful reality of their afflictions’”.

Excerpt from *Ozanam Still Speaks to the World Today* Issued by National Council of Australia Society of St Vincent de Paul 1980 pg 23.

HOMEWORK

Have you got a story you'd like to share with your fellow Vincentians?

Please send your stories and photographs to rosetta.leo@vinnies.org.au (Lismore) or sarah.kemp@vinnies.org.au (Maitland/Newcastle).



Editor Rosetta Leo, Member & Community Engagement Coordinator, Lismore Central Council.