

# WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



St Vincent de Paul Society  
good works

January 2025



*Good morning Members, Volunteers and staff,*

Welcome to 2025! Hope you all had a great Christmas and enjoyed your New Year celebrations.

As we start this Jubilee Year 2025 “Pilgrimage of Hope”, Pope Francis declares “Hope does not disappoint (Rm5:5). Bishop Brian echoes his words, I encourage you “Be brave, take heart, all who put your hope in the Lord (Ps 31:24).

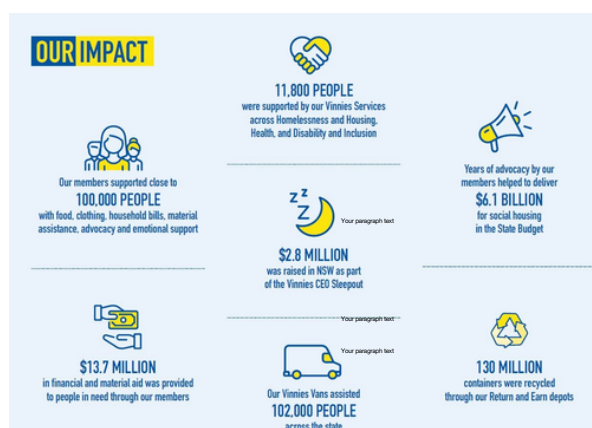
Let’s hope we in the Society can take hope, re-invigorate our Conferences and continue to serve those less fortunate in our communities.

We have a great team under the leadership of Solange Frost, so please reach out and use them to improve our good works. Looking forward to supporting you all in 2025.

*God Bless*

*Peter Doris*

Central Council President



The last financial year saw our Conference members, frontline workers, volunteers and employees make an immense difference to thousands of people in the face of challenging circumstances.

The need for assistance is deeply concerning, and speaks to the capacity of the Society to make a meaningful impact on the lives of people across the state. As we move together to address hardship, it is important to acknowledge what we’ve achieved, recognise why our work is important and to know that a better future is possible. To read the full report, visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

## In this quarterly newsletter you can expect:

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

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## Vinnies Vans

Vinnies Vans offer food, social connection and referral pathways out of homelessness and poverty to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and disadvantage.

With ever increasing need, the Vans are asking Members in the Illawarra, Macarthur and Wollondilly to consider becoming volunteers for food service or kitchen crew.

If you are interested in joining the Van team, please contact [vinniesvan@vinnies.org.au](mailto:vinniesvan@vinnies.org.au)

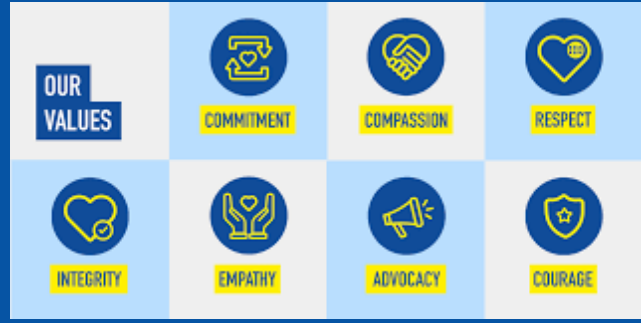


## Brain teaser

Joan often goes on visits alone because there isn't always another Conference member available. She believes that people open up more when she visits by herself. What are the possible problems associated with this practice?

- Visiting alone can pose safety risks and decrease accountability.
- It may also weaken the support system that pairs of visitors can provide.
- The Conference policy requires at least two members for every visit.
- Conferences should work towards a schedule that suits members and the people we assist, and consider recruiting more volunteers to ensure no member has to visit alone.

If you would like support to recruit new members, please contact Community Outreach Coordinator Nat Nicastrì on 0429656886.



## Congratulations Berry!

The St Vincent de Paul Society is committed to providing the highest standards of service, and maintaining high levels of trust with in the communities we serve.

All Society personnel (members, volunteers and employees) are required to complete compliance modules around Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, Privacy and Confidentiality, and our Code of Conduct.

Congratulations to Berry for being the first WCC Conference to achieve 100% compliance. Well done!



## Member spotlight

The St Vincent de Paul Society sincerely thanks Brian Ritchie for his many years of service as a dedicated Member.

Brian was recently presented with his Lifetime Service Award by Wollongong Central Council President Peter Doris.

In October, Anne Hayward, President of St Patrick's Conference Sussex Inlet, presented Peter with a Certificate of Appreciation, recognising his dedication to the community he has served for 15 years, and marking the end of a chapter, as health challenges now draw Peter's service to a close.



Thank you Brian & Peter!



# Useful resources



## Bring your bills

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) can help those struggling with energy or water bills. For assistance, call 1800 246 545 or visit [ewon.com.au](http://ewon.com.au).

The EWON Team with Government and community organisations including the St Vincent de Paul Society, will host 'Bring Your Bills Days' to help locals in need.

Wollongong - Tue 4 Feb 11am - 3pm  
Berkeley Community Centre,  
40 Winnima Way, Berkeley

Shoalhaven - Wed 5 Feb 11am - 3pm  
Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre  
42 Bridge Rd, Nowra

## Sacred Space

The Sacred Space is a virtual space on MAVS to pay tribute to members who have passed away, as well as an opportunity to add unwell members to a prayer list.

Anyone can go online to light a virtual candle. Names for the space can be emailed to [mission@vinnies.org.au](mailto:mission@vinnies.org.au)

## Fundraising support

Did you know that each Conference can have its own online fundraising page? It can be customised to promote your fundraising activities, take online donations and can be linked to parish communications via email (to local businesses, family and friends too!). If you would like to set up a page, please contact Nat on 0429656886

## Training & development

The St Vincent de Paul Society provides a range of personal and professional learning opportunities to help you offer 'a hand up' to the people we assist.

Register on the MAVS website for the following online training:-

- Notre Dame Leadership Program Information Session, 5 Feb 11am - 12pm
- Conference Presidents Mentoring Session for Interested Mentors, 10 Feb 2pm - 3pm
- Orientation session are for new and existing members and volunteers, 17 Feb 10am - 11:30am

## You Can't Say That!

'You Can't Say That' is a great resource developed by the University of Wollongong in response to a recognised need for respectful communication, particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was originally a terminology guide, with a range of terms that you shouldn't say, others that require careful consideration, and the reasons why. It has recently expanded to provide some guidance around what respectful relationships look like and includes content on cultural safety, allyship, how to recognise and call out racism and, importantly, what you CAN do.

'You Can't Say That' is available free on the UOW website [www.uow.edu.au](http://www.uow.edu.au)



## A few reminders:

- Vinnies offers safe, completely interest-free and charge-free loans of up to \$2000 to individuals and families across NSW. The NILs Team can be contacted on 1800 484 664.
- Our Operational Support Officer is available for appointments in person at the Wollongong Central Council Support Centre in Warrawong, or online Mon-Thu 9am-3pm. Please reach out to Alisha on 0491 071 890 if you require help with onboarding, MAVS, police checks or WWCC.

## Follow us on Facebook

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

If you have an event or good news story to share, please contact Nat | [nat.nicastri@vinnies.org.au](mailto:nat.nicastri@vinnies.org.au)





# Mission, Spirituality & Pastoral Care

Happy New Year! Many of you will be aware that 2025 is a Jubilee Year and Pope Francis has chosen as its theme: HOPE, and also that international motto for the St Vincent de Paul Society is "Serve in Hope" (Serviens in Spe).

Much of what I have already read about the Year of Hope, seems to speak directly to those of us working for the aims of the Society!

In announcing the holy year [Bull of Indiction, 9 May 2024] Pope Francis said: [1] "Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings..... Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future..... For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope." "During the Holy Year, we are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind." [10]

Bishop Brian also highlighted this in his Christmas message: "As pilgrims of hope, we can walk this path joyfully, knowing that Jesus walks with us. May the hope we find in Jesus help us to see the gifts we have been given and respond generously to those around us whose hope has been dimmed by life's difficulties. Our light of hope grows as we share it, so let us put our light "on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light"! (Lk 8:16b).

Francis closes [25] by saying: "Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them: "Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart!" (Ps 27:14)

A jubilee year is about forgiveness and reconciliation. Let's pray as Francis did in opening the Holy Doors of St Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve, that the Holy Spirit will soften hardened hearts so that "enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands and people seek to meet together." Amen.

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

# Social Justice



- A huge congratulations to Tom Gersbach for his recent appointment as Chair for the Social Justice Committee in 2025.
- Camden Wollondilly Wingecarribee Network (CWWN) had success last week when Camden Councillors voted unanimously in favour of a motion to hold a Homelessness and Housing Affordability Forum in the first quarter of 2025. In collaboration with local Social Justice representatives from St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW), CWWN had met before and after local elections with the mover, Cr Peter McLean, to raise concerns for housing issues and discuss resources at Council's disposal for the creation of affordable rental housing.
- We are seeking member representatives to re-established the South Region Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee to progress the Society NSW's commitment to First Nations justice and healing. If you are interested, please contact [alisha.way@vinnies.org.au](mailto:alisha.way@vinnies.org.au)

# Upcoming events

- Sat 1 Feb WCC Meeting, Warrawong Support Centre
- Tue 4 Feb Bring Yours Bills Day, Berkeley
- Wed 5 Feb Bring Your Bills Day, Nowra
- Tue 13 Feb National Apology Day
- Wed 19 Feb C-Side Van mobile testing, Coniston
- Thu 20 Feb Community Connection Service Expo, Bulli
- Wed 26 Feb OWeek Youth Member recruitment, Wollongong
- Wed 5 Mar Ash Wednesday
- Wed 19 Mar Harmony Day Community Event, Camden
- Fri 21 Mar Harmony Day
- Fri 18 Apr Good Friday
- Sun 20 Apr Easter Sunday



**SAVE THE DATE | CEO Sleepout**  
Last year 1591 business, community, and government leaders attended 15 events, and raised an incredible \$8.66M impacting 388,000 lives! If you can, please invite local leaders to attend the Wollongong event by sending an online invitation [www.ceosleepout.org.au/nominate-a-ceo](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au/nominate-a-ceo)

