



SYDNEY ARCHDIOCESE MEMBER NEWSLETTER



2025 Greater Sydney Community Sleepout

Sydney Archdiocese Central Council President - John Walden's Message

My fellow Vincentians, Volunteers and Staff

This will be the last newsletter before the end of this year, so I take this opportunity to wish everyone the best for the Festive Season and look forward to carrying on all our Good Works again in the New Year. We have achieved so much during 2025, but there is an ever-growing list of new challenges for us to address next year.

I wish to thank everyone for their commitment in delivering the services that are so badly needed by all those that we assist.

As I read the numerous articles in this newsletter, I never cease to be amazed by the breadth of Good Works that we are involved in across our Central Council area. It is inspirational to see the coverage we provide in our local communities. Keep up the effort!

I suspect that by the time you are reading this newsletter your thoughts will be turning to Christmas and the needs of those that we assist. The appeals, the hamper lists, the delivery of hampers, putting hampers together and the list goes on. We do make a difference to these peoples lives.

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Message from:
Metro Regional Director
Louis Hearnden

As we approach the close of 2025, I want to acknowledge what a significant and rewarding year it has been across Sydney Archdiocese. Since stepping into the Regional Director role at the beginning of the year, I've had the privilege of working alongside you through a year shaped by dedication and continued service in the face of growing need.

This edition highlights the breadth of our Vincentian community from the success of the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout to conferences marking inspiring milestones, to schools deepening their commitment to faith in action.

Looking ahead, 2026 will see significant investment across our region to strengthen local impact. This year we began capital works upgrades across our Vinnies Support Centre (VSC) network. This will continue in 2026 to ensure that these spaces continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve well into the future. In addition, we're improving our Vinnies Vans service with improved reporting capabilities and new runs bringing food, dignity, and support to even more people doing it tough. Membership growth remains a priority for the year ahead, with a focus on sustaining and supporting Conferences to continue their vital work. A warm welcome to all new members who've joined us this year. You are a valued part of our mission. Thank you to all who've invested time in welcoming and engaging new or existing Members in the Vincentian mission this year. Your efforts help ensure that our members remain the Society's greatest strength, now and into the future.

With the 2025 Christmas Appeal now underway, your role in meeting the cost-of-living crisis is more vital than ever. Every home visit, conversation, hamper, and referral is a powerful act of hope. Thank you for all you've done this year to live out the mission with compassion and conviction. Let's finish 2025 together with purpose and carry that energy forward into a year of renewed service in 2026.

Dempsey Medal Award

CONGRATULATIONS! JIM GOTHARD

Hello Everyone

Just a short note to acknowledge the wonderful news that "our own" Jim Gothard was presented with the Dempsey Medal. The Dempsey Medal is awarded annually by the Archbishop of Sydney to Members of the Catholic clergy and laity for outstanding contributions and service to our Catholic Church.

Jim has been a Member of our St Vincent de Paul GyMEA Conference for over 27 years and was president for 8 years. He is a life Member of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Jim was an accolate for our parish church for many years, also a reader and a Minister of Holy Communion. I have personally known Jim for over 30 years and seeing first hand his wonderful contribution to our St Catherine Laboure GyMEA parish. Jim goes about doing the work of Christ without any fuss or fanfare. He is a true example of our Catholic faith.

For me, one of the things that stands out about Jim is his total humility and it is wonderful to now see him receive the greatest accolade. Jim was presented with his medal by Archbishop Fisher at St Mary's Cathedral on Sunday 6th July.

Frank Tierney
President, GyMEA St Catherine Laboure Conference



PREMIER'S VOLUNTEER

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Earlier this year, one of our long-standing parishioners reached out to one of our Conference Members with a proposal. The Premier of NSW recognises a number of volunteers during Volunteer Week, and this parishioner wondered whether it would be appropriate to nominate one of our tireless St Vincent de Paul Conference Members. With the help of others, we were pleased to hear from our local State Member of Parliament, Ms Maryanne Stuart, that the nomination had been successful.

Fast forward to last week when Ms Stuart made a phone call to Mrs Fran Postill, inviting her to attend a function at the NSW Art Gallery.

Fran's work with Vinnies over many years has been tireless. She is currently the Conference Secretary and was until quite recently, the Conference President. In her role, Fran not only gives her time to visit those who need assistance in our local area, but she has also volunteered in a number of other roles within the Society. She leads by example with care, humility and generosity. For all those who know Fran or have met her, this recognition would come as no surprise.

Never one for attention, Fran had to explain that she was currently having a short holiday and was "somewhere in the Nullabor desert."

Rather than disappoint her husband and her family, Fran said she wasn't able to attend the event.



Fran asked the current Conference President to attend on her behalf. On Thursday, 22nd May, hundreds of volunteers gathered at the NSW Art Gallery for the Premier's Volunteer Reception. Following a number of speeches, it was time for the awards. (Fran's was one of the "early ones") we were told. In fact there were only two awards presented!

On behalf of Fran Anthony Weir accepted the award for "Community Service" from Ms Jodie Harrison. Unfortunately, the Premier had gone to assist the flood-affected areas of northern NSW, however it was an honour to receive this award on Fran's behalf. Fran said, "If I get any sort of award, make sure you know that the award is for everyone in the Conference." Congratulations Fran on receiving this award and thank you for everything you do for others as a Vincentian.

Thank you to all of the volunteers for your time,
your service, but above all else, your care for others.

Anthony Weir
President, Engadine-Heathcote Conference





A message from

Leo Tucker

Executive Director of Mission and Spirituality



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Commemorating Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Dear All,

Today the St Vincent de Paul Society commemorates the passing and feast day of our co-founder, Antoine Frederic Ozanam, 172 years ago in Marseille. There is much to reflect upon within the life and legacy of Frederic Ozanam. Frederic's vision was for the revival of a Church of integrity, a Church inspired by Gospels rather than by corruption and politics. He called for a Church to hear the cry of the poor.



Born in Milan 23 April 1813 and baptised Antione Frederic Ozanam, he was one of 14 children but only one of 4 surviving to adulthood. Frederic moved to Lyon in 1815 where he lived much of his childhood and schooling years, before moving to Paris to join the University of Paris in 1831.

He was a literary scholar, lawyer, journalist, author, university lecturer, and social justice advocate. Frederic and friends revived a university debating group known as the Conference of History, which discussed the impact of the Church through history. In many ways, it was a debating group on the virtues of the catholic faith. Through these reflections and discussions on faith he and his companions were moved and challenged to expressing this raw faith into actions of charity and of love. In this on the 23rd April 1833, Frederic's 20th birthday, the group then became the Conference of Charity, later known as the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Frederic Ozanam later married Amelie Soulacroix 1841, the daughter of the rector of the University of Lyon, which was followed by the birth of his daughter Marie in 1845. Sadly, his naturally weak constitution fell prey to consumption, which he hoped to cure by visiting Italy, but on his return to France he died in Marseille on Thursday, September 8, 1853, at only the age of 40. He was buried in the crypt of the church of St. Joseph des Carmes at the Institut Catholique in Paris.

Frederic's legacy...

- Frederic was a man of faith. He understood the importance of his work within the guidance and nurturing of prayer and spiritual advice. One such advisor was Sr Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity working in the slums of Paris who nurtured Frederic's spiritual centre or spiritual love, as she expressed, a love that was practical and relational. She reminded Frederic often that charity was to "be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor."
- Frederic was a man of love. His love for God and Church was strengthened because of his relationships with those experiencing deep poverty, his confreres and his family.
- Frederic was a man of hope. He saw the importance of a legacy of justice and advocacy for the disadvantaged in society. He related by being a voice for them. Frederic was a champion for social justice especially towards the end of his life. His desire to raise controversial issues in the magazine 'The New Era' was not at all welcomed by many conservatives within the Church. However it was because of his relationships with the people he loved, the blindness of Government and Church and the continued oppression of the weak and vulnerable which moved him deeply to speak out. This response for justice and love permeates in all aspects of the writings of Frederic as he wrote; "Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books or in discussions with politicians, but by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes."

Understanding the charisms of Frederic Ozanam is crucial in deepening our personal spirit. It will give us a profounder insight into the words of our mission and vision, as well as a deeper appreciation for our Society logo of the hands receiving, assisting and blessing.

May Frederic Ozanam continue to guide our Society in hearing and understanding the cry of poverty and faithfully serve in compassionate love.



It's cold out there....

On a chilly Friday evening, over 150 students from St John Bosco College, Engadine gathered for their Winter Sleep Out in support of the St Vincent de Paul Society, raising vital awareness and funds for the rising issue of homelessness in Australia, and standing in solidarity with the most vulnerable.

With the support of their generous staff team, student participants were challenged at the start of the evening, inspired by the theme 'Be An Anchor of Hope', to step into the shoes of those experiencing these harsh realities in the local community each night.

Following this, the students ate a simple meal outdoors in the cool, dark night. Anthony Weir, the Engadine Heathcote Conference President, then gave a presentation giving a little history about the Society's beginnings before describing what the local Conference does. The students were very surprised to hear how young Frederic Ozanam was when he and his friends began their ministry.

After the presentation, teams of students assembled and sorted many food items donated generously by the Bosco College community throughout the duration of Term 2 for their Winter Appeal. These food items were then packaged into Food Hampers and stowed in an awaiting trailer. The hampers were delivered to Sutherland Vinnies Service Centre, where they will be added to the emergency relief stock.

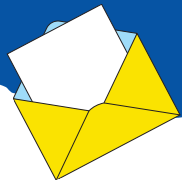


A moving liturgy concluded the activities for the evening, where students pledged to be Anchors of Hope for those experiencing hardship, and each committed to continue the inspiring work achieved throughout the evening, making a lasting and meaningful impact.

Finally, it was time to "settle down" for the night on the floor of the hall using cardboard packaging as a shelter. Some faced the challenge with good humour, whilst others quickly realised this would be no easy feat.

Skip to the early hours of the next day as students awoke to a very frosty morning. Despite their youthful enthusiasm, it was clear the Sleep Out had certainly given the students a taste of how difficult it must be to not have the basic need of secure housing. As they learned, the incidence of rough sleeping has risen sharply in the Shire over the last twelve months.

Thank you to all of the adults who supported the students, and a special thank you to the students themselves for being 'anchors of hope', and for accepting the challenge and making a difference in the lives of others.



Vinnies
good works

A true story of Vinnies support and home visitation experience
written by the Person We Assist (PWA)

**Teamwork by West Ryde Vinnies Support Centre and North Ryde
Conference Members is showcased here.**

"Marianne" is a fictitious name to protect the PWA's anonymity.

Dear Lorenzo,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the assistance provided to my family by St Vincent de Paul Society.

We were referred to St Vincent de Paul by Way Forward when we faced significant financial hardship due to unemployment. Our sole source of income was the Job Seeker payment, which was insufficient to cover our basic living expenses. I contacted the organisation by phone on June 26, 2025, and submitted the necessary documents.

Eloise from West Ryde Vinnies kindly reached out and, on June 30, helped us with our overdue electricity and gas bills. On July 10, Mariola and Allan graciously visited us and provided food vouchers, which were greatly appreciated during this difficult time.

Although very grateful for this assistance, we were overwhelmed and distressed by mounting rental arrears and the imminent threat of eviction. Eloise referred us to NSW Homes, but unfortunately, our application was declined. She then referred us to the North Ryde Conference for further support. You called and kindly visited along with Pat on August 1, to assess our situation. Having lived in our rental home for nearly 19 years, this was the first time we sought help from a charitable organisation such as St Vincent de Paul. It was a very humbling experience, as we had no other recourse.

On August 7, you informed me that the Conference had approved assistance to cover four weeks of our rental arrears - it truly was a blessing and an answered prayer. Eloise also notified our property agent that the payment was being processed.

We are deeply grateful to St Vincent de Paul - especially the North Ryde Conference led by you and Eloise from West Ryde Vinnies - for your kindness, compassion, and invaluable support during this challenging period.

Thank you once again for your generosity and assistance. My family and I are forever grateful. *May God continue to bless the work of your hands and keep you well.*

Sincerely, "Marianne"





GLEBE CONFERENCE

Glebe Conference at Glebe Primary School for NAIDOC Week event

The next generation: Strength, Vision, and Legacy - Glebe Conference participation in NAIDOC WEEK at Glebe Public School- Friday, 4 July, 2025.

Glebe Public School is a vibrant community that values and celebrates all Aboriginal peoples; and Vinnies includes all in the good works we perform because we also value and celebrate diversity in the communities we serve.

So, we were delighted to once again be invited to participate in the school communities' celebration of NAIDOC and to maintain our visibility in this community. The photos depict some of the very immersive and special moments.



Sutherland Regional Council Retreat Day

Thank you for accepting the invitation to attend the Sutherland Regional Retreat Day, "Pilgrims of Hope" on Saturday, 13th September at the St John Bosco Parish Centre, Engadine.

Mouna Roche, our presenter and Sutherland Conference Member, was really looking forward to spending this time with Members. Typically so well organised, Mouna brought her buoyant and personable manner to her presentation, as we nurtured our spirits and reflected on our growth as pilgrims of hope to those whom we assist and to all other people we meet.

Coffee and tea were available throughout the day, with the most magnificent strawberry and fresh cream scones. A delicious morning tea and scrumptious lunch were provided. Thank you to the Engadine crew who helped organise the event.

It was truly a diverse day, with opportunities to share, reflect, and learn. What a great opportunity to enrich the work we all do and become increasingly aware of what it is that different Members bring to those they assist.

*We are pilgrims of hope, prepared to roll up our sleeves
and make a difference in the world.
My takeaway – 'hope' is a verb!*

*Anthony Weir | President, Sutherland Shire Council,
& Engadine Conference*





Helping residents beat the cold (and the heat!)

Elderly and vulnerable residents in the Burwood community are now better prepared for extreme weather thanks to a local resilience project delivered by the St Vincent de Paul Society, with \$5,000 in funding from Burwood Council's 2023/24 Community Grants Program.



The project delivered:

- Climate support packs with essentials like hot/cold packs, fans, water bottles, and window coverings
- Help navigating rebates, emergency services, and financial support
- Curtains, heaters, and handyman services for improved home comfort
- Swimming lessons and gear for 18 individuals to stay safe in the water and access Enfield Aquatic Centre on hot days.

This initiative has strengthened safety, awareness, and community connections—supporting some of our most at-risk residents during periods of extreme weather. Burwood Council is proud to support projects like this that bring real, lasting benefits to our community.

Kingsgrove Bankstown Regional Festival Mass



My sincere thanks to you all for attending the Kingsgrove Bankstown Regional Festival Mass at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Riverwood. Our thanks to Fr John Doherty for saying Mass.

It was wonderful to see so many attend on this special celebration day of the Feast of St Vincent de Paul. Special thanks to Ian Brown and Jen Emanuel (did not attend due to illness) of the Riverwood Conference for the preparations associated with the event.

Many thanks to John Walden, the President of the Central Sydney Council, for attending.
It's a significant event- well done to Jen and Ian and Riverwood Members and to all Regional Members who were able to attend

Peter Brown
Regional President, Kingsgrove Bankstown Region.



Sutherland Shire new Regional Council President

It was to be a momentous Regional Council Meeting in Sutherland as the Regional President, Ms Pat Cudmore had announced that her time in the role had come to an end after four fruitful years.

A number of Conference Presidents thanked Pat for her leadership of the Sutherland Council through some challenging times. They spoke of Pat's passion, her leadership from the heart, her genuine commitment to building bridges and ultimately helping those we assist across the Shire. Pat reflected on her time as Regional President; the challenges and the successes. Seeing dormant Conferences spring back to life, developing strong connections with paid staff and working with others on the Sydney Archdiocesan Council are just some of the highlights Pat referenced. Pat especially thanked Jane Marsh the Sutherland VSC Coordinator for her support, both personally and her support of the whole Council. John Walden the SACC President was in attendance to thank Pat for her commitment and passion and to conduct inevitable election.

Thankfully Pat was more than willing to accept the role of Regional Vice President after the election of Anthony Weir as the new Regional President. Pat's contribution will therefore continue as she gives so much of herself to the needs of others.

Thank you Pat, you are a blessing to the Society!

Sutherland Shire Festival Mass

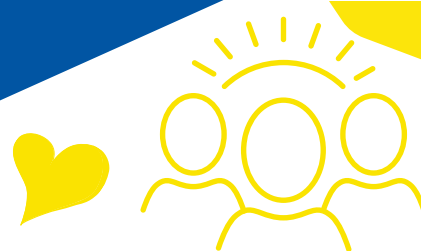


On 19 September, the Membership and friends gathered at St Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Gymea. It is always an opportunity to share in the Eucharist, to present special awards and to truly celebrate all that the Members do in assisting those other locals in need. Gymea Conference President, Frank Tierney organised this wonderful event along with others from across the Conference. Rev Dr Greg Morgan lead the celebrations so well along with other local Parish Priests.

A highlight was the joyful and reverent Commissioning of Anthony Weir as new Regional Council President and the farewelling and thanks for Patricia Cudmore's 4 years of similar service.

We had the school's Mini Vinnies as the choir. Yet the most significant of all attendees were the Society's Members from across each of the 9 Sutherland Shire Conferences. We are so keen and grateful to have fresh eyes and ears, insights and experiences to bolster the strengths of the Society in the most pivotal of all work, that of Conference Members. And with each, another giving and compassionate heart. Our other guests were welcomed and truly enjoyed the occasion.

Service and outreach alive in the the Kingsgrove Community



The Kingsgrove community is a vibrant hub of compassion and action, where the spirit of service and outreach is not just a concept, but a lived reality. Through the collective efforts of generous individuals and dedicated organisations, meaningful initiatives are making a tangible difference in the lives of those facing hardship. These initiatives transform empathy into action, providing essential resources, fostering social inclusion, and raising vital funds to create a more just and compassionate community for all.

St Ursula's College spent the winter months learning and advocating for the vulnerable across Sydney. We visited the Ignite Food Store, a vital initiative of Jesuit Social Services in Emerton. This social enterprise provides quality, low-cost food to the local community, ensuring that individuals and families facing hardship have access to essential groceries. Ignite Food Store continues to promote health, wellbeing, and social inclusion, offering dignity and support to those in need. As part of our visit, students organised a food drive and filled two trucks full of donated items.

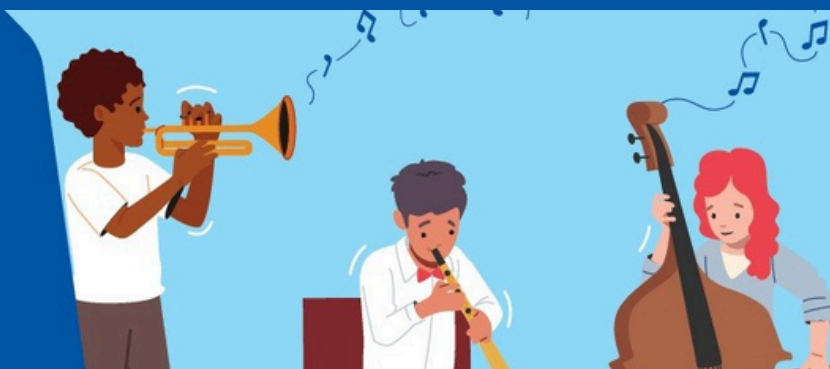
I also thank the 90 students and 10 staff Members who came together in a powerful act of solidarity with those experiencing homelessness and hardship in our community for our annual Winter Sleepout, Affectionately nicknamed our "Serviam Sleepout" what began as a night of sacrifice unfolded into a deeply moving experience, shaped by moments of stillness, learning, and shared conviction.

Participants took part in a guided workshop on Catholic Social Teaching, led by Mr Chris Nolan, Social and Ecological Justice Animator for Caritas Australia. This was followed by Lectio Divina, where students prayerfully reflected on the Gospel's call to justice. These moments not only deepened their understanding of faith in action but also inspired them to embody the values of service and justice in tangible ways.

Thanks to this initiative, \$24000 was raised for Vinnies Kingsgrove and NSW Vinnies Vans, offering practical help and hope to those most in need. The Serviam Sleepout reminded us all that while one night cannot replicate the experience of homelessness, it can ignite compassion and deepen our commitment to justice.

Antoinette Nader
Service and Outreach Coordinator

BUSKING FOR VINNIES



In August 2025, Busking for Vinnies brought the Vincentian spirit to life across Greater Western Sydney, with schools and Conferences working hand-in-hand to transform civic spaces into places of music, faith, and service. Performances featured Catholic Schools and Colleges from Katoomba across to Parramatta, supported by the Winston Hills and Springwood Conferences.

Want to get involved in 2026?

New locations are being explored! If your Conference would like to get involved, volunteer or learn more, please contact Roydon Ng at roydon.ng@vinnies.org.au.



Macquarie Region Festival Mass

We were honoured with the attendance of our Sydney Archdiocese Central Council President, John Walden, who also assisted in commissioning the new Members and handing out the Service awards. It was also timely as he announced the bequest from Kevin Patrick Barrett for Vinnies Sydney Archdiocese, of which we are part of. We had Kevin listed in our Prayers of the Faithful.

We commissioned thirteen new Members, recognised ten Lifetime Service awardees and one 15-Year Service award. Thanks to Fr Greg Walsh cm PP and to Marsfield St Anthony's Parish, for the warm and strongly-Vincentian flavoured Mass and homily, and for the on-going support for the Vinnies. Thanks too, to Georgette Francis for attending, former Support Centre Coordinator and current Liberty Plains Coordinator.

Thanks also to our Conference Presidents: John Lumley for Ryde, Jim Lemcke for Meadowbank, Tom Seeto (Kevin Lyons is away) for Marsfield, Michael Youssef for Eastwood, Lorenzo Escalante for North Ryde and your Members for joining us, all, our most important people.

Thank you also to our VSC Coordinators, Susan Adams and Eloise O'Connell and to North Ryde Festival Mass Team for the refreshments and setting up/cleaning up the venue. A great team effort!

May God continue to bless us all.
Warm regards,
Lorenzo

Have Your Say – Vinnies Voice Survey 2025

The 2025 Vinnies Voice Survey is still open, and we are thrilled with the incredible response rate so far – thank you to everyone who has shared their thoughts! Your feedback helps shape how we communicate and recognise the contributions of our Members. Last year's insights led to real changes, and we are committed to continuing that progress.

This year's survey takes just 5 minutes and is completely anonymous.
Make sure your voice is heard by **Tuesday, 11 November**

SURVEY LINK <https://survey.xref.com/survey/VinniesVoice2025>

Riverwood Community Fair



I'm delighted to report on a very successful Vinnies Store presentation at the Riverwood Community Fair, held on 21 September

The Community Fair has been running since 1979 and includes up to 160 stores and thousands of community service workers and volunteers. The Fair is one of the largest community fairs in Sydney.

It was very enjoyable, and it helped us to highlight to the local Riverwood community and the surrounding south-western suburbs, that we have a real Vinnies presence in the local area. We have a Vinnies Welfare Conference in Riverwood.

My sincere thanks to all Vinnies Members who assisted with the store, and especially Eloise O'Connell and her husband for the tremendous work and effort put into the store. My thanks goes also to Jenny Holt and her colleagues at Club Rivers for their help as well. Many thanks to all,

Kingsgrove Conference Bunnings BBQ

Firstly, Bernie Deady and the Kingsgrove conference held a Bunnings BBQ at the Kingsgrove Bunnings store. This is the fourth year of the BBQ at Kingsgrove, and they have been huge successes. Firstly, it generates a good profit for the Conference, plus its excellent exposure of the St Vincent de Paul name. These BBQs are a fantastic initiative to increase the community awareness of the Society.

The parents and children from St Ursula's Catholic Girls High school Kingsgrove, and Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School Kingsgrove, assisted throughout the day. It's a real team effort. Congratulations to all involved.

Peter Brown (Kingsgrove Bankstown Regional Council President)

St George Region Festival Mass

St George Region hosted its annual St Vincent de Paul Mass hosted by St Patrick's Vincent de Paul Kogarah Conference.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Terrence Brady and Fr Eduardo De Pedro Orilla. The theme for the regional Mass was about our Mini Vinnies being our future. Peter Houweling was impressed by the representatives from the St George Region's schools. They received awards for their hard work and devotion to the ethos of St Vincent de Paul Society and providing donations to Vinnies Christmas & Winter Appeals.

Liz Adams, Regional President of St George



L to R Liz Adams, Christine Riley, Carmen Touyz, Julie Lloyd, Bishop Brady and Lisa Eskander (Conference President).

REFLECTIONS ON REBUILDING A CONFERENCE

By Jennifer Murphy Past President
of Sydney St Mary's Cathedral Conference



The Rule 3.3 Meetings of the Vincentian Members::

The Members meet as brothers and sisters with Christ in the midst of them, in Conferences that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds and friendship between Members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalised. The entire society is a true and unique worldwide community of Vincentian friends.

The Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly but at least every fortnight.

In 1881, the first four St Vincent de Paul Society Conferences in NSW were established. Only Sydney St Mary's Cathedral Conference is still in operation today; however, it nearly came to the same end as the others. Around 2005, it had reduced to 1 Member and Lane Cove Conference were doing most of the client support. Efforts were made to recruit new Members, which was successful in a way, but objectively it was more of a roster of volunteers than a Conference as meetings stopped after a few months. By 2019, the Conference had reduced to a couple of registered Members, but all the client assistance was being done by Members of Lane Cove. As the then president of Lane Cove Conference, I asked whether the city client support should be a special work of our Conference or if we should try and rebuild the Cathedral Conference. It was agreed that we should attempt to rebuild.

With the support of the priests at St Mary's Cathedral, we did a big recruitment drive during one week in Lent in 2020, attending 12 masses and getting details of over 50 interested people. This resulted in 13 prospective Members. We had our first recommencement Conference meeting on 10 March 2020. Twelve days later, Australia went into lockdown! By the end of the lockdown, only two new recruits were interested in continuing. Three others came back later in the year.

This felt like a major setback at the time, but we persevered and continued home visits whenever we were legally able to, so we could engage our new Members. In November 2020, four other Lane Cove Members and I officially became Members of the Cathedral Conference, along with five new Members. We commenced fortnightly meetings and sort out a spiritual advisor. Because of the increased COVID-19 government support, the requests for financial assistance were reduced, so to keep everyone involved, we started to do social visits, providing practical non-financial support, and in conjunction with Lane Cove Conference, moving second-hand furniture. We have continued these supports as financial requests for assistance have increased.

We repeated recruitments during Lent in 2021, 2022 & 2024. Over the four years from 2020 to 2024, we have had 24 Members join, some for a short time, some on-going. We currently have 16 Members, ranging in age from 22 to 79 (average age 52), with diversity reflective of Australia.

Over this time, we have had the privilege to witness the transformation of the lives of some of the people we have assisted; the sadness of the deaths of others; and the reality of a continued subsistence of existence of many. But what has been wonderful to witness is the growth in fellowship and faith within the Conference as a whole and among individual Members. The three elements of charity, spirituality and fraternity are very evident. Its ongoing vitality relies on the generosity of time of all our Members and the capacity of some to take on leadership roles.

It takes a lot of time and energy to support the people we assist in our communities, but it also takes time and energy to make a Conference, and I believe this is equally, if not more important, because with more Conferences and Conference Members, we can do more.

I hope this reflection encourages others to be committed to Conferences, which are much more than a group of volunteers.



St Vincent de Paul Good Works Summit

The St Vincent de Paul Society held a 'Good Works Summit' at the Bankstown Sports Club on Saturday 11 October

It was a fantastic event which gave us the opportunity to mix and meet many members of the management team, plus St Vincent de Paul members from all parts of NSW. Amongst a list of quality guest speakers, was Tanya Plibersek who is the Minister for Social Services of Australia.

There were various discussion workshop groups that were held separately to discuss specific aspects of the Vinnies operations and activities. They were extremely useful.

I was delighted to attend the Summit along with around 400 Vinnies members and Vinnies management. Our Punchbowl Conference President, Benni Pagdanganan, along with her Vinnies colleagues, were in attendance.

Considering the Summit's huge success, I assume that the next Summit will be held next year and a great chance for even more of our Members to attend. It's a great opportunity to learn more about our St Vincent de Paul Society.

Regards, Peter Brown (Kingsgrove Bankstown Regional Council President)

Winter Appeal Donation

Rose Bay/Watsons Bay
Conference
from Mary Sri (President)
McAuley School's Years 5 & 6
students.



National Volunteer Week



Crows Nest VSC volunteers and members

thank
you

Morning teas and lunches were held at some of our Vinnies Support Centres and Stores across Metro. We thank all of our Members and Volunteers who give so generously of their time to help individuals and families, especially in times of crisis and adversity. Volunteering is vital to the nation's wellbeing. Australia's communities and lifestyle are underpinned by your wonderful contributions.

CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2025



Everyone deserves access to the essentials needed to live with dignity. Even in difficult times, people should feel secure knowing they can afford a home, put food on the table, pay their bills, and maintain their health. This is especially true at Christmas, when people should be able to enjoy the Festive season without stressing over unpaid bills, high rents, and the costs of providing a Christmas gift or meal for loved ones.

Australia's persistent cost of living pressures are far from over. The cycle of poverty and disadvantage still continues for some, with effects that are long term and intergenerational. At St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, we are seeing short term safety nets being regularly relied upon for ongoing relief. Many of the people we support are being trapped in a cycle of disadvantage and poverty from ongoing high costs of living, the housing crisis and food insecurity.

The 2025 Vinnies Christmas Appeal will focus on this cycle, so that we may stop its progression and provide assistance that makes a lasting impact and improvement in people's lives.

For a second year in a row, our Members have helped over 100,000 people across the state with immediate intervention, safe housing, alongside food, clothing and medical aid. We continue to help people throughout their journey of rebuilding with counselling, education, vocational and life skills training.

The Society is grateful to our dedicated Members for the important role they play in raising funds for the Christmas Appeal. Funds raised will directly support our core programs, providing vital assistance to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, poverty, and cost of living pressures.

The Christmas Appeal launched on 1 November 2025. Materials to support your Christmas Appeal efforts, such as posters, donation envelopes and Conference booklets have been available since 13 October 2025.



Our Central Council Twins with the Northern Region in Fiji

Our State is twinned with the National Council of Fiji, but the Sydney Archdiocese Central Council is twinned with the Northern Region in Fiji. Unlike other Regions in Fiji, this one is based around the island of Vanua Levu and outlying islands to the north of the main island of Viti Levu.

Over the weekend of 28 and 29 June 2025, I attended meetings of both the National Council (representing our State Council) and also the Northern Region. This was in Labasa, the main city on Vanua Levu. It was held in the Parish hall of the local church of The Holy Family.

We have already put in place many initiatives in our Central Council twinning arrangement, especially in relation to spiritual matters. Such as:

- Provided examples of Festival Mass booklets and how to organise these events
- Provided (40) St Vincent de Paul t-shirts, so their Members can be identified as Vincentians in their communities
- Provided meeting prayer cards, although they will need to be modified for their local requirements.
- Facilitated attendance for their Members at both our own State and our own Central Council retreats (online)
- Provided wider access to the Spiritual Reflection Guides
- Facilitated the Regional President to attend one of our Central Council meetings (online)
- In the process of arranging the provision of spiritual instructional material to be provided for local training.

The series of meetings over the two days was inspiring, and to see Vincentians from very remote areas of the country (outlying islands and the mountainous interior of the main island) take days to get to and from these meetings and participate, at their own expense.



In this photo are some of the representatives that attended the meetings over the weekend. In particular, far left back row Semesa Vilise – acting National President, centre of back row, Fr Thomas Lanyon – National Council Spiritual adviser, and Christina Rokoua – National Treasurer front row second from the left.

It was truly inspiring to see the pride which these Members displayed in wearing the t-shirts. The balance of the t-shirts was provided to other Members and some clergy (priests and nuns) who are also part of the Vincentian family in the north of Fiji.

This is in addition to the Twinning funds that our Central Council will provide to the Northern Council to assist them with their good and inspirational works. In the course of time, we will also look at funding special projects when they reopen.

John Walden
Sydney Central Council President



On a cold September evening, over 100 participants gathered at Western Sydney University for the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout, raising awareness and vital funds to support people experiencing homelessness. The event brought together Vinnies Members and volunteers, school students, and community Members who braved the chill to better understand the daily reality faced by thousands across NSW.

The night featured powerful stories from people with lived experience, inspiring speeches, and interactive activities like the “Walk in Their Shoes” Reflection Path and the Vinnies Information Stalls. Live music by the incredible Forbes Street Band added warmth to the night. While some participants stayed the night, others joined for the evening program, all united in their commitment to making a difference.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout has already raised about \$67,000. Special acknowledgement goes to the fundraising efforts of our Members, staff and volunteers. These funds will go directly towards Vinnies Conferences and programs across Sydney, providing food, crisis accommodation, financial assistance, and pathways to stable housing.

Events like this remind us that homelessness is more than statistics; it’s about people, families, and communities. By standing together, we shine a light on the issue and take action towards creating a more compassionate and just society.

*A heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated, donated, or volunteered,
your impact is real and lasting!*

Photos from the night are available to view on the [MAVS Website](https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/articles/greater-sydney-community-sleepout-2025/)
<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/articles/greater-sydney-community-sleepout-2025/>

Thank you to our local event sponsors:



MEMBER TRAINING SESSIONS

Join our upcoming online training sessions
from the comfort of your own home!



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

These live sessions, hosted on Microsoft Teams by the Vinnies State Learning Team (Linda, Joanna, and Edna), will help you complete the required modules for members and volunteers to keep your membership up to date.

To participate, simply register for the session(s) you'd like to attend using the links below. Once registered, you'll receive the Teams meeting link.

For questions or support, please contact your Member & Community Engagement Coordinator: MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au **More information can also be found on the Vinnies website:** <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/>

VINNIES ORIENTATION

Tuesday 18th November 10 -11.30am
Tuesday 16th December 3-4.30pm

Register Here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>

CODE OF CONDUCT

Wednesday 5th November 11am-12pm
Thursday 13th November 12-1pm
Monday 1st December 3-4pm

Register here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

Monday 10th November 10-11am
Thursday 20th November 3-4pm
Monday 8th December 11am-12pm

Register here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>

SAFETY INDUCTION

Tuesday 4th November 3-4pm
Wednesday 12th November 2-3pm
Wednesday 26th November 10-11am

Register here: <https://vinniesnsw.snapforms.com.au/form/orientation-online-session-registration>



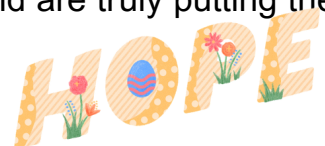
Mini Vinnies at St Patrick's Mortlake

Mini Vinnies - St Patrick's This year saw the start of Mini Vinnies at St Patrick's Mortlake. Year 5 students were given the opportunity to be a part of the Mini Vinnies program, led by teacher Lara Livolsi and Family Educator Janine Hannigan. We had a group of twenty two enthusiastic and energetic students sign up. Our Mini Vinnies at St Patrick's have been working very hard this year to raise money for the St Vincent De Paul Society. Mini Vinnies students were given the opportunity to participate in sandwich making. A team of Year 5 students have continued to prepare sandwiches once a term and have made over 300 sandwiches so far this year. We held our annual Camp Cooinda winter sleepout where dads and kids braved the cold, sleeping in tents on the Parish Parklands, to raise money for those sleeping rough!

The St Patrick's community raised \$630 for those less fortunate than us. As well as raising money, the school community donated food items to create snack packs as part of the Winter Lenten Appeal. Students were able to pack over 200 snack packs which were then delivered to the Lewisham office to be distributed on the vans service. The fundraising continued into the year, as students came to school in their comfiest pyjamas and raised \$360. The Mini Vinnies program also allowed the students to express their creativity. They were given the opportunity to make beautiful chaplets for our Mother's Day liturgy, design bookmarks that were packed into the snack packs as part of the Lenten Winter Appeal and create gift packs for our HSC students. While most of the above activities were completed at school, St Vincent De Paul offered students the opportunity to attend a Mini Vinnies Gathering Day.

Students were eager to learn more about the society and were intrigued by the idea of 'hope jars'. The students wanted to bring this idea back to our school community and now each classroom has a hope jar on their prayer table. Our Family Educator, Janine Hannigan, has also organised outreach for our parents. They were given the opportunity to make sandwiches at the Lewisham Hub and also went out to the Vinnies Van. Parents had conversations and brought food to the clients on these runs to East Lakes and Maroubra Lexo hub. What's next at St Patrick's? Our Mini Vinnies are excited to be holding a fundraiser at the end of the term. Our sandwich making will continue and we are eagerly awaiting information about the Christmas Appeal.

Just as Mary Aikenhead saw the needs of the less fortunate and responded with compassion, Our Mini Vinnies at St Patrick's have also responded to the call and are truly putting their faith into action.



Young Leaders of Hope



Over two days in late July, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) Strathfield campus became a vibrant gathering place of faith, compassion and leadership as students and teachers from across the Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay dioceses came together to grow in the mission of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Wednesday 24 July, more than 220 primary school students from 28 schools attended the annual Mini Vinnies Gathering. The day invited students to reflect on how they can be leaders of hope, living out the Gospel call to love and serve others—especially those experiencing hardship. Through engaging workshops and reflections, students explored real-world issues including the cost of living, housing, and homelessness, while learning about the work of Vinnies Support Centres, the Vinnies Van, and caring for God's creation through stewardship. Students were encouraged to respond with compassion and action through their Mini Vinnies groups. They discovered that even small acts of kindness, rooted in love and justice, can reflect the light of Christ in the world.

Thursday 25 July, the inaugural Vinnies Secondary Schools Gathering brought together 90 high school students and teachers to deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and how faith can inspire leadership and advocacy for the poor and marginalised. The day included inspiring talks, group activities, and moments of reflection that challenged students to think critically about social justice. They explored how to put faith into action and walk alongside those in need—just as Jesus did. The passion, energy, and spiritual maturity of the students was uplifting. Many shared their commitment to continuing the mission of Vinnies in their schools and parishes, acting as witnesses to God's love through service.

These two days were a powerful reminder that young people are not just the future of the Church—they are the present. Through their generosity, faith, and courage, they are already making Christ's presence known in the world. "It's truly inspiring to witness so many young people embrace the call to be leaders of hope," said Metro Vinnies Schools Engagement Team (Chris Nolan, Ketaki Wasnikar, Roydon Ng). "Their energy, compassion, and commitment to social justice reflect the very heart of our mission—to walk alongside those in need with love, dignity and faith. We look forward to continuing this journey with schools across the dioceses."

Looking ahead, the St Vincent de Paul Society is excited to continue nurturing these young leaders of faith. Planning is already underway for next year's gatherings—to be even more enriching, prayerful, and impactful for students answering the call to love and serve.



Vinnies Secondary School Engagements and Vinnies Service Medallion



 Vinnies
Service Medallion

CHANGE STARTS HERE

Secondary students program information



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW *good works*



TAKE THE FIRST STEPS TO CREATING CHANGE!

The Vinnies Service Medallion (VSM) recognises and celebrates the contributions of secondary students (Years 7–12) to community service, leadership, advocacy, and fundraising.

Gain real world skills and experience, make a tangible impact on your local community and receive formal recognition for completing each stage of the program to build your resume for university and the workplace!



RECOGNITION FOR YOUR GROWTH

Participating in the VSM will provide opportunities to develop your leadership and communications skills and provide real-world experiences in Social Justice and Community Engagement.

Bronze



Silver



Gold



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The VSM program is aimed at secondary students, ranging from Year 7 to Year 12. The program is inclusive and strives to be accessible to all interested students. Participate with your school group or join as an individual. Participation in the Vinnies Service Medallion is free of charge, and all secondary students are welcome.



CONTACT US

Are you a student, or a teacher/parent who knows students who would benefit from this program?

Scan the QR code or visit our
website here: [youthnsw.vinnies.org.au/
vinnies-service-medallion](http://youthnsw.vinnies.org.au/vinnies-service-medallion)



For more information regarding Vinnies Secondary School engagements and the Vinnies Service Medallion, please email: metroschools@vinnies.org.au

St Vincent de Paul – Feast Day 27 September

The spirit of St Vincent de Paul is alive and well in 2025.

Growing up in a Catholic family in the 1960s, the St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies) was very much part of our world. My father was a Vinnies volunteer and my mother spent many years working at the Rendu Centre. We later moved to a Vincentian parish where we encountered the distinctive charism through the work of the priests, brothers and various ministries of the Daughters of Charity.

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation founded in Paris by Frédéric Ozanam in 1833. Profoundly moved by the abject poverty of families living on the streets after the French Revolution, he gathered a small group of people to begin the work of ministering to the poor, modelling their mission on the patron saint of Christian charity, St Vincent de Paul (1581-1660).

“Deal with the most urgent needs. Organise charity so that it is more efficient... teach reading and writing, educate with the aim of giving each the means of self-support. Intervene with authorities to obtain reforms in structure... there is no charity without justice.” (St Vincent de Paul).

Vinnies has grown today into a global organisation with over 800,000 Members and 1,500,000 volunteers, assisting 30 million people each day. The Society works towards creating a more just and compassionate world by providing food, clothing, housing and access to support networks for people in the community who are marginalised or disadvantaged. Vinnies offers a “hand up” rather than a “hand out” and advocacy on behalf of those in need goes to the heart of what the St Vincent de Paul Society stands for.

While historical perspectives and contemporary data help to provide context for the work of the Society, the interactions between Members and volunteers with clients is where the Gospel message and the spirit of St Vincent de Paul himself are enlivened. Vinnies is about engaging with the personal stories of others, wherever and in whatever circumstances prevail. The slow and gentle work of God in the world today is never clearer than in the relational aspect of walking with another and getting to know their story. Jake’s is one such story...

[Click here](#) to read Jake’s story.

“May those... in the shadows be seen by those in the sun” | The Sisters of The Good Samaritan

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CEO MEET & GREETINGS

Dear Members,

We are pleased to invite you to our upcoming CEO Meet & Greet event in [Sydney Archdiocese](#).

Join CEO Yolanda Saiz and her leadership team for an open and interactive session. Hear updates on the Society's major projects, share your thoughts, and help shape the conversation about our future direction and impact in the community.

Where: Vinnies Lewisham, conference room (YANA)
2C West Street Lewisham

When: Thursday 20 November 2025
9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Please RSVP by 6 November to metrooso@vinnies.org.au



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

This is a perfect opportunity to ask questions, share on issues, and chat about what matters most. Followed with morning tea, enjoy good company, great conversation and of course some sweet treats! **RSVP HERE**

Child Protection Week was held on 7 - 13 September 2025



"Child abuse and neglect is preventable. If we all work together as a community, we can create an Australia where all children can grow up safe and well. What role can you play in supporting children and their families?"

Leesa Waters, CEO, NAPCAN

Vinnies NSW is demonstrating a strong commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation by actively working towards compliance with multiple sets of standards and relevant legislation.

**Contact Vinnies Safeguarding
1800 4 SUPPORT**

MAVS HUB

Safeguarding Children & Young People

[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/resources/safeguarding-children-vulnerable-adults/safeguarding-children-young-people/>

Watch here: Geraldine Doogue and Robert Fitzgerald (former Commissioner) discuss 'What is a Child Safe Organisation'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ8WDi_-BPU

Homelessness Week 2025



h Homelessness Australia



<https://homelessnessaustralia.org.au/homelessness-week/>

Cumberland Council hosts youth workshop on homelessness

Cumberland City Council, in partnership with the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, marked Homelessness Week 2025 with a youth-focused workshop designed to raise awareness and empower young people to drive social change. Homelessness Week ran until Sunday 10 August, under this year's national theme 'Homelessness Action Now', which called for urgent and coordinated action to address the root causes of homelessness and provide support for those affected.

Cumberland Council and the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW invited local young people aged 12 to 25 to attend a Homelessness Week Youth Workshop held on Wednesday 6 August, from 4pm to 5:30pm at the Auburn Centre for Community.

The interactive workshop:

- Explored the experiences and causes of homelessness in Western Sydney;
- Provided insight into how Council and the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW support vulnerable community Members; Created a platform for young people to share ideas and perspectives;
- Supported the development of a youth-led social justice action plan.



"Homelessness impacts people across all parts of our community, including young people. By engaging youth in open dialogue and social planning, we are investing in long-term, community-led solutions," said Mayor, Ola Hamed. *"This is not a problem that can be fixed overnight, the ongoing cost of living crisis is affecting all age groups across our communities and is forcing more people into homelessness every day."*

"We will continue to drive change and advocacy in the sector through Council's Homelessness Action Plan."

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Regional Director – Metropolitan, Louis Hearnden, identified housing pressures as one of the leading reasons for people seeking support in the region.

"Across the Cumberland region, our Members have supported over 2,750 people during the last financial year with approximately half experiencing housing stress," he said. St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Schools Engagement Officer, Roydon Ng supported Cumberland's ongoing action and education in the space. *"As a young person in Cumberland, I've seen both the struggles and the strength in our community. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be walking alongside people and lifting each other up with dignity and hope."*

"It's not just talking about homelessness – we're taking action. It's about choosing to lead with love, to listen deeply, and to build a future where everyone has the chance to belong and succeed," he said. Cumberland's Community Development team works in collaboration with Homes NSW, Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, 4Voices, St Raymond's Maronite Catholic Parish and Dooleys to conduct weekly outreach programs, providing food, blankets and contact with support services.

ROSALIE RENDU FORUM 2025



Raising Our Voice – Speaking up for Social Justice

Around 100 members, volunteers, staff and friends of the Society joined the Rosalie Rendu Forum during Anti-Poverty Week on 16 October to discuss the importance of advocacy in making positive change for vulnerable members of our community. Moderating the event, Geraldine Doogue reflected on the current state of the world – with so much war and political turmoil obscuring the deepening injustices closer to home including poverty, homelessness and domestic violence. She drew on the expertise of four justice advocates who have engaged in different types of advocacy for and with the people they assist.

Speaking of supporting people with lived experience of homelessness, Charmaine Jones of StreetCare spoke of the commitment of people who are homeless wanting to prevent others going through the same experience. With support, she says, “They offer a perspective that differs from many decision makers within Government and it leads to better outcomes, more accountability and better service delivery.”

Vinnies Member Jo Karaolis spoke of organising the Ku-Ring-Gai housing group, advocating for social and affordable housing in a part of Sydney resisting development. Jo says, “The housing crisis has been with us for a very long time... If we’d been providing leadership during this time we could have led housing reform. Good government comes down to good communities that care for each other locally and on the broader stage.” Delia Donovan of Domestic Violence NSW spoke of political engagement to get much needed funding for services that are stretched beyond breaking point. Political engagement is about relationship building and bringing lived experience into the dialogue;

“We need to know when to go hard and when not to go hard, because we need to be able to stay in the room and remain pragmatic, but also to be bold and brave. It’s a really fine balancing act”.

Dharag Elder and educator, Aunty Thelmerie Rudd spoke of how having a voice is fundamental to the dignity of all. We need a place where all voices are heard. In the face of ignorance and instances of racism, Aunty Thelmerie asks; “How can we create a space where we can all sit together, we can all talk, we can all yarn? ... we need to look at issues and look for what we can advocate on for community and for kids in school.” Geraldine asked the panelists about key learnings and advice when engaging in different kinds of advocacy. Some of the wisdom shared included the following:

- Good advocacy with decision-makers is about building long-term relationships of equal partnership and is not primarily adversarial.
- Learn from and form respectful connections with the people who disagree with you.
- Engage with all sides of politics – not just the party in power.
- Approach peak organisations who can lend advocacy support and follow up on decision-maker transparency and accountability.
- Come to advocacy with suggested solutions, not just the problem.
- Good solutions often ensure a “win win” for all sides.
- Story telling is vital – people from the front line and people with lived experience are often the strongest advocates.

Thank you to Geraldine and our inspiring panelists Aunty Thelmerie, Delia, Jo and Charmaine. An audio recording of this Forum honoring the legacy of Sr Rosalie Rendu can be found here: <https://www.vinnies.org.au/nsw/articles/raising-our-voice-speaking-up-for-social-justice>