Happy National Volunteer Week to you all! Welcome to the first Member and Volunteer Newsletter of 2016, developed by the Policy & Member and Volunteer Services Department at the NSW State Support Office.

We are excited to be providing this resource again with a whole new look, featuring:

- An ‘e-news’ format for a more efficient means of distribution.
- A connection for readers to a new web-based platform, providing resources, news, contacts, and events about and for our members and volunteers. Our aim is to provide members and volunteers with the tools, information and resources that will assist you to be effective and well informed in your service.
- A platform that has been custom designed for you, our NSW members and volunteers. Please note, it is not a public site, and therefore will not come up if you search for it. You need the link or address mavs.vinnies.org.au to access it.
- Ongoing platform management and updates will be done by the Policy & Member and Volunteer Services Department, and we look forward to sharing resources and hearing from you!
- A printable version of the newsletter in a PDF format is still available here.

We are just getting started and keen to hear from you how we can better customise this new resource in order to best support you. There is much more coming so be sure to check in regularly and see what’s new. If you have news or events you would like shared, please contact us at volunteer@vinnies.org.au

Thank you for all you do!

Policy & Member and Volunteer Services

This is the printable version of the E-news available at mavs.vinnies.org.au

Please share the newsletter with others in your network who may be interested.

In this edition
1. ‘Celebrating Joyful Service’ Broken Bay Festival Day
2. A new resource for Regional Council Presidents
3. Member and Volunteer Advisory Committee
4. Rosemeadow partnership - responding to a need
5. Breaking the cycle of poverty in local communities
6. Vinnies volunteers committed to the cause
So what exactly is the Policy & Member and Volunteer Services Department?

I am pleased to share with you several of the exciting new changes that have been introduced over the past year by the State Support Office’s Policy & Member and Volunteer Services Department.

The newly restructured Department — formerly referred to as Member and Volunteer Engagement (MAVE) — aspires to bring about a more responsive, flexible and welcoming Society through a capacity service in partnership with our Central Councils.

The Department employs a multi-faceted approach to supporting our Central Councils through three teams that work together collaboratively:

- **New Initiatives and Policy Team** (creating frameworks and monitoring/measuring processes)
- **Engagement and Support Team** (actively engaging and communicating with leaders and other key stakeholders to provide responsive support and advice); and
- **Training and Development Team** (delivering learning opportunities for members and volunteers to build capacity and advance the Society’s work).

See page 9 for full details of the team contacts.

As always, thank you for your tremendous commitment to the Society, and all those we provide hope to each day.

Christopher Wilborn
Head, Policy & Member and Volunteer Services

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‘Celebrating Joyful Service’ Broken Bay Festival Day

Over 80 Broken Bay members attended a full day Festival event ‘Celebrating Joyful Service’, on 19 March at Pennant Hills.

The keynote speaker was Robert Fitzgerald AM, who spoke about ‘Good Governance and Good Works– How can good governance and structures enable the best support and hand up to people we assist?’ Denis Walsh, State Council President, also spoke about current challenges and future potential for the Society and about how becoming incorporated assists the Society to achieve its mission and vision.

The hope that members would gain a better understanding of the Society’s governance structures and how they support our good works was highly exceeded according to the feedback from participants. Attendees also reported that they were inspired by the initiatives for enriching our service and engaging new people from what they heard about in the ‘Good News Stories from the Regions’ and the two workshops they chose to attend selected from the following:

- **Leading Joyfully**: A workshop for Presidents
- **Valuing the role of Treasurer**
- **Spirituality: Growing in faithful service**
- **Growing our Membership**
- **Appreciating our Retail Centres**
- **Social Justice in Action**
- **Year of Mercy and Resources for Faith Formation**
- **Raise our Voice with our Young People**

Members were delighted to also be able to meet the Bishop of Broken Bay, Peter Comensoli, who spoke briefly in the afternoon offering his encouragement for the members and their work in our parishes and local communities.

The Festival Day wrapped up with vibrant discussions in Regional Council groups about the ideas, learning and initiatives they’d like to share with other members. Just before the Festival Day the Regional Presidents participated in a ‘Round Table Discussion’ lead by the Engagement and Support Team, where they discussed ideas for recruitment and renewal. The Regional Presidents and some members who were inspired by Festival Day are now considering opportunities to put some of these great renewal ideas into action.

Videos from the day are now available to view. Please follow the links below to view:

- [Keynote Address by Robert Fitzgerald](#)
  - Good Governance for Good Works HB
- [Governance and Good Works in the Society Denis Walsh HB](#)
- [Q&A with Robert Fitzgerald and Denis Walsh HB](#)
- [Good News Stories from the Regions HB](#)

If you would like to know more about the Festival Day, please contact John Donnelly at j.donnelly@ozemail.com.au or 9451 4712.
**A New Resource for Regional Council Presidents**

All Regional Council Presidents in NSW will have the opportunity in the next several weeks to participate in the first of three Leaders’ Resource Kit Conversation sessions being held in each Central Council. The extensive leadership consultations that began the ‘Unlocking Leadership Potential’ program were completed last year. Feedback received identified the key priority areas for the Leaders’ Resource Kit and Conversations.

Janice Jones and Kate Scholl of the Policy and Member and Volunteer Services Training and Development Team are coordinating the program and are working with a Consultation Workgroup consisting of Regional and Central Council Presidents (pictured above).

This project was endorsed by the NSW State Council in February 2016. A key part of the program is three face-to-face conversation sessions with the Regional Council Presidents, the Central Council President, and other potential leaders in each Central Council throughout 2016.

The conversation sessions provide the opportunity for Regional Council Presidents to draw on their experience and engage in a practical and meaningful dialogue with one another and the Central Council President about relevant issues for leaders. Janice and Kate facilitate the sessions using the topics and contents of the Kit to focus the discussion. The program intends for members to grow in confidence as leaders, particularly in support of other leaders.

**Volunteer Survey**

The Volunteer Survey is a new initiative that aims to improve the connection with the Society’s approximately 15,000 volunteers. The objective of the survey is to gain a better understanding of the needs, aspirations and expectations of our volunteers.

The Policy & MAVS Department will be conducting the survey, recognising the importance of building and maintaining a strong working relationship with our members and volunteers. It is anticipated the Volunteer Survey can assist us in beginning to capture the collective voice of our broad volunteer-base and in-turn provide a deeper understanding of their demographical information, developmental needs, as well as their potential interests in other volunteer pathways across the Society.

The survey will be run as a pilot during May and June 2016, in collaboration with Executive Officers and Volunteer Managers, to seek feedback before it is rolled out. The Volunteer Survey will play a role in influencing other current volunteer initiatives that aim to advance this critical space.

**Member and Volunteer Advisory Committee - Your Representatives**

The Member and Volunteer Advisory Committee is the result of the amalgamation of the State Membership Advisory Committee (SMAC), the State Youth Team and the State Recruitment Team. This merger was approved at the February 2015 Board meeting.

The Member and Volunteer Advisory Committee provides an opportunity to share knowledge and different perspectives on how to better support the good works that members and volunteers are doing and reflect the Society’s mission. Inclusion, collaboration and relationship-building will be embedded in all the work that the Committee undertakes.

Pictured is the Committee at its first meeting this year on the 30th April.

The committee will provide a diverse space for:

- Developing new initiatives and strategies to recruit new members and volunteers in a sustainable way for their engagement now and into the future
- Encouraging and supporting Central Councils to ensure that leadership roles are filled and effectively supported at every level
- Enabling the development and promotion of new, innovative and flexible opportunities to serve people in need.

This Committee recognises that by bringing together members and volunteers of all ages, a wide base of skills, knowledge and perspectives is available to advance its purpose.

Some Central Councils still require representatives to serve on this most important committee. If you are interested please contact Sarah Lentern at Sarah.lentern@vinnies.org.au or 8622 0306.
The Annual Rosalie Rendu Lecture was held in Sydney on Wednesday, 14 October 2015 with keynote speaker Dorothy Hoddinott, 2014 Australian Human Rights Medallist and Principal of Holroyd High School.

The topic was ‘Investing in children to break the cycle of poverty’ with panelists, Pat Fogarty, Southern Area Regional Manager for St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services and Emily Goldsmith, Sydney Regional Council President.

Here is Emily Goldsmith’s brief address.

SOFT HEARTS, SHARP MINDS, AND HARD FEET.

Good evening all,

I’m here this evening to talk about how members of the Society contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty in our local communities. In essence, it is through connection. And it is having soft hearts, sharp minds, and hard feet.

In the Society we are fortunate enough to be able to do extensive outreach work. Through our home visitation, we have a unique opportunity to sit with people in their homes, and check in. This is where it counts. In Sydney alone we visit around 1,200 people a month. We have the opportunity to end the cycle of poverty with each of those people.

As Dorothy has discussed, we have a long way to go in terms of tackling disadvantage. Research tells us that over 80% of people accessing human services have experienced some type of trauma in their childhood. Trauma, particularly trauma that has never been fully acknowledged or worked through with a professional, is often the root cause of the many elements that lead to poverty.

Assisting in breaking the cycle of poverty, often means acknowledging their pain, and working in a trauma sensitive way. It is having a soft heart – being there for someone who is vulnerable, remembering that the people we serve are doing the best they can with the tools they have been given. We hold no judgement, we connect, we listen and we offer assistance.

But it will happen if relationships are formed, and trust is built. Then, and only then, will we be successful about opening up another dialogue around what is next. After we assist the immediate need, can we support in any other way?

In this way, we need sharp minds. To break the cycle of poverty – early intervention and prevention is key. As we visit families in need, we need to look to the children to see how we can ensure the cycle does not continue. It means not being afraid to ask the children how they are going, to also check in with them.

Vinnies has so many amazing resources – we can assist with nearly every issue – we can refer people to financial counsellors, to respite programs for parents, find out where there might be free after school care, mentoring programs, child support workers. We have funding to ensure the home can be safe. The list goes on.

Find out what Vinnies can offer those you visit in the community, and take a bag of resources with you – there are many pamphlets available with information. I would encourage you to particularly think about the hand up we can offer children. We know that families at highest risk for child maltreatment as well as other parenting difficulties are those least likely to engage with formal support services. These families are the ones who fall down the cracks, but we might see them. Having a sharp mind to foresee bigger issues, to link them in with early intervention and prevention programs, is vital.

We also need hard feet. We need perseverance. We need to keep going even if we’re feeling tired and unappreciated. Our ongoing presence is key in preventing poverty. Research tells us that ongoing engagement with families has the potential to negate the effects of neighbourhood disadvantage and enhance a sense of social connectedness and belonging.

Continued on page 5
The Overseas Partnership and Development Committee (OPDC) has a new Chairperson, Frances Scurfield. Frances said “It is a great honour to be asked to take up this role and I hope to maintain the high quality of the Committee by continuing and improving our spirituality, financial and practical assistance to our overseas twins.” Frances has been the OPDC representative and Twinning Officer for the Wilcannia Forbes Central Council for the past seven years and noted: “I have received great leadership from the previous OPDC Committee and Chairman and am excited about this opportunity to build on that.”

The OPDC plays a crucial role in promoting our Overseas Development programs and encouraging fellowship with members in other parts of the world. The Rule provides a simple description: ‘Twinning is the direct link between two conferences or councils consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources’.

**Twinning Prayer**

In the gospels Our Lord says: I have come that they may have life and may have it to the full.

We pray that developing nations achieve a just share of the world’s food and resources. May they promote the dignity of their people, lost through colonisation and exploitation.

May we work with them in love, respect, hope and joy, shaping a more just and compassionate world.

This we ask in Jesus’ name. AMEN

Within this context, we know that the children and families who could perhaps benefit from support services the most, those from disadvantaged families and communities, are reported to be the least likely to engage with them. Our consistent support is therefore vital to ensure we can break the cycle of poverty.

Home visitation is unique in the sense that although we are there from a service, we are presenting in a safe, non-confrontational and helpful way that often means we get to sit with families who would never otherwise connect formally to a service. We are not there for any other reason than to respond to their needs. That is what sets us apart, and what often enables us to be able to delve deeper into the issues that may be fostering disadvantage. Our membership reach is extensive, and incredibly unique. We need to make it count.

I want to finish with one of my favourite quotes, “How we walk with the broken speaks louder than how we sit with the great” – thank you all for the wonderful work you are doing in walking with the broken. I would urge you to remember to have soft hearts, sharp minds and hard feet and to not forget the children in the work that you do – they are key in ensuring an end to the cycle of disadvantage.

Thank you

Emily Goldsmith

Keynote speaker, Dorothy Hoddinott
This year’s annual review and plan for Conferences is now available for use.

This resource is designed to enable a conference to:
• Reflect on what we do and how we share our service together as Vincentians,
• Build our strengths and realise the potential of our Conference,
• Learn from each other and agree on new things we want to do / try.

This year’s version comes with ready to use templates and examples and a spiritual reflection.

It has been designed for members to reflect on their Conference experiences in relation to the Six Priority areas of the State Strategic Plan. This resource provides a suggested process for Conferences to use to reflect on their experiences in the past year, look at their current situation, and consider areas of potential development.

Tell us what you think
There is a Feedback Form for the Conference President or their delegate to complete after the Conference members have conducted the Annual Review and Plan. This will enable us to improve the process and supporting documents. Feedback may also be provided by using the hard copy or on line. Click here

A ‘testimony’ about the Resource from Helen Smith in Forbes, NSW writes: “Last time we participated in a review, I had found it truly worthwhile both from a personal point of view and as a revitaliser for the Conference as a whole. It gave an opportunity to build community, allow the members to speak freely, see how much the Conference had achieved, to acknowledge weaknesses and to plan a way forward in line with “The Rule”. The process description was clear and concise and simply expressed in “user friendly” language. I know that in our area, many members feel somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of paper work that they are asked to complete and for the members to fully participate the above elements are essential.”

Conferences have reported that holding the review outside normal meeting time and combining it with a social event (sharing or going out to lunch/dinner) has been most successful.

CEO Sleepout
This year Vinnies CEO Sleepout is being held on 23 June in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle. Every dollar raised by the Vinnies CEO Sleepout helps provide crucial assistance to people experiencing homelessness, with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness permanently. www.ceosleepout.org.au/

Community Sleepouts
Vinnies members are uniquely placed to help shape awareness around the issue of homelessness. Vinnies Community Sleepouts connect members to their local community to raise funds and awareness for local homelessness services by hosting a shared ‘sleepout’ experience. www.nswvinniescommunitysleepout.gofundraise.com.au/

If you have any questions or comments, please contact: Kate Scholl, Development and Events Officer (02) 9568 0209, 0425 211 065, kate.scholl@vinnies.org.au
The rollout of Connect, the new point of sale system for our NSW Vinnies Shops, is well underway, and proving to be a great success.

Beginning in October 2015 with North Parramatta, Connect has now been implemented in 76 Vinnies Shops across four Central Councils – Parramatta, Broken Bay, Wagga Wagga and Bathurst. By the end of May a further 27 Vinnies Shops in the Lismore Central Council will have Connect, bringing the total number of “Connect-ed” shops to 103. The implementation is due to be completed at the end of October 2016.

So far approximately 1,300 volunteers and staff have been trained, and the feedback from those using Connect couldn’t be more positive. Connect is easy to navigate with coloured department icons and a brand new touch screen that makes ringing up a sale very simple. And for those who are a little nervous about using it for the first time, the Connect Helpdesk is helpful and friendly.

Virginia, an area manager from Parramatta Central Council says “We have found the shops are happy with Connect. It was introduced when I was on leave and some of the volunteers enjoy teaching me how it works!”

Vinnies Volunteers committed to the cause

Volunteers give their time and effort to a great cause but it is not all roses and rewards, but our volunteers find a silver lining to every cloud.

The sun is already hot at eight o'clock on a Monday morning when about a dozen volunteers turn up to help at the Saint Vincent de Paul charity shop in Orange in central-west New South Wales.

The fine weather means the usual ‘Monday Special’ of dumped and strewn clothing, toys, furniture and broken electrical goods, is at least dry. Volunteers say after a weekend of rain it can be particularly off-putting.

They shake their heads as they sort through the items — most of which will be thrown away — and prepare to open the shop for another week.

Wearing her blue Vinnies apron, Janet Reddan was one of the first volunteers to arrive at the Orange op shop to start sorting through the mess.

"This is the 'Monday Special' but today it's really bad, because they've pulled everything apart," Ms Reddan explained.

"They come through at night and take what they want and just leave us the rubbish. It's disgusting and you come in of a morning and see this and wonder why?"

John Rudd is a volunteer driver for Vinnies and is on the Monday shift to take the items which cannot be sold to the local tip.

He said after a weekend he usually took two truck loads. "That's pretty close getting up to two tonnes on the old scale," Mr Rudd explained.

He said it was disappointing for the volunteers but they were used to it.

"But at the end of the day we have a great group of guys here, and at the end of the day we have a pretty good laugh," he said.

This story was written and published by ABC Central West. Read the full story here
Frederic’s Legacy

On 23rd April, we celebrated the birth of our founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam. There is so much which we could write of this man’s achievements in forming and developing social conscience and social reform and he did this in just a short life span.

Frederic was a man of faith. He understood the importance of his work within the guidance and nurturing of prayer and spiritual advice.

Frederic was a man of love. His love for God and Church was strengthened because of his relationships with the poor, his colleagues and his family.

Frederic was a man of hope. He saw the importance of a legacy of justice and advocacy for the poor.

Therefore, it is certainly fair to say that he developed and influenced some of the key principles of social thought and reform in the Church and society today.

Rosemeadow members start a new partnership - responding to a need

Dennis Baert, President of Rosemeadow Conference, formed a partnership between Rosemeadow Conference and the Hub Community Services in Campbelltown to provide emergency food more effectively to the people they assist.

The partnership was negotiated between Dennis Baert and Louise Hickey, the Community Team Leader of the Hub.

The Hub Community Services is a not-for-profit organisation operating under Campbelltown Church of Christ with the aim of assisting the more disadvantaged in the community.

The Hub also has community garden where vegetables are grown and given to those we assist.

The partnership provides around 300 emergency food relief hampers per year and is growing fast. It also sells $10 hampers worth almost double that amount which include eggs, bread, and vegetables.

Thanks to the proactive work of the Rosemeadow Conference, the partnership is making a significant difference to families in the community that otherwise would go hungry.

Social Justice Forum 2016

Over the past three years we have seen the creation of a social justice community in the Society. This year we will have a workshop-based forum where delegates will create a statewide roadmap for advocacy and leave with clear plans for their role.

Members, volunteers and employees from our Central Councils, Regional Councils and Special Works are invited.

Date: Saturday, 4 June 2016
Time: 9:30am – 4:00pm
Venue: Mercure Hotel,
Sydney, 818 - 820 George Street (Central Station)

At this year’s forum you will be asked to choose a workshop when you RSVP.

Workshop Session 1 – Choose 1 of these Priority areas
A. Affordable Housing and Homelessness
B. Refugees and Asylum Seekers
C. Energy Affordability and Cost of Living Pressures

Workshop Session 2 – Choose 1 of these Role/Opportunities
D. Regional Social Justice Representative Workshop
E. Conference Social Justice Representative Workshop
F. Telling our story – advocacy, case studies, and partnerships
G. Supporting Social Justice – for those not directly engaged in social justice

Lunch, Morning Tea and post-event drinks will be offered to all attendees.

Please RSVP by Friday, 20 May 2016
Email social.justice@vinnies.org.au or call 9568 0289. Seating is limited so reserve your seats early!

SAVE the DATE: A Regional Council Presidents’ Breakfast Gathering will be held at 8 am on the morning of the Forum. Invitations will be sent soon about this special opportunity.
### Vinnies Celebrates National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week (NVW) is an annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution of our nation’s volunteers.

Established in 1989 NVW is the largest celebration of volunteers and volunteerism in Australia. It provides an opportunity to highlight the role of volunteers in society and say thank you to more than 6 million Australian volunteers, including over 20,000 members and volunteers who work for the St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW.

The theme for NVW 2016 is – Give Happy, Live Happy. According to Volunteering Australia, research suggests that volunteers are happier, healthier and even sleep better than those who don’t volunteer.

We invite you during this NVW to take a moment to reflect on the positive impact volunteering has on you and to share this with your family, friends and colleagues, giving happiness and hope to people experiencing disadvantage.

Happy National Volunteer Week to you all and we hope that you are all able to join in with the Society’s recognition activities locally to celebrate the difference you make.

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### Policy & Member and Volunteer Services - Team Contacts

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