



Role Description: Conference Member

Role title	Conference Member
Reports to	Conference President
Roles reporting to this role	Nil
Primary role objective	Conference members are those who are desirous of living their Catholic faith, or are committed to the ethos, mission, aims and objects of the Society, and who seek to live out their faith and commitment in action through the spirit of Christian charity. They do this by loving and serving their neighbour in need and participating effectively in Conference meetings, formation programs and charitable activities of the Society. (The Rule, 2012, Part 3, p.56)
Duration	Ongoing

The St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Paris 1833 by 20-year-old university student Frederic Ozanam. Frederic and his friends wished to put their faith into action by serving the poor and needy of the time. The first Australian Conference was founded shortly after, in 1854.

This compassionate outlook, enthusiasm and vision continues today in Australia. There are thousands of people who regularly share their time and energy to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged people all around Australia. Our aspiration is an Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice.

Mission

The Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope, and joy, by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

Vision

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering 'a hand up' to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging people to take control of their own destiny.

Our Values

- **Commitment:** Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values
- **Compassion:** Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement
- **Respect:** Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions
- **Integrity:** Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values
- **Empathy:** Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception
- **Advocacy:** Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the cause of human injustice
- **Courage:** Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future

About this role

In this voluntary role, you will be part of a Conference (group) that serves people experiencing disadvantage in your community. Conference 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 (The Rule, 2012, Part 1, p.20).

The work of Conferences varies depending on local need, and the strengths and interests of its members. Conference work may include but is not limited to:

- Visiting with people in need. Members visit in pairs and visitation may take place in the home of the person seeking assistance, on Society premises, or in an institution such as a hospital or prison.
- Providing assistance to people in need in the most responsive and dignified manner. Assistance may include material help, advocacy, referrals, and/ or a range of other actions.
- Attending meetings and reporting back about visits.
- Volunteering within services such as Vinnies Vans, on programs such as Homework Help for kids in need, or with another service or program that utilises volunteers, such as Vinnies Shops.
- Participating in advocacy and other work related to matters of social justice
- Fundraising for the Society and/or promoting of the work of the Society.

In this role you will:

- Enjoy the support and community life that is part of the Conference
- Learn more about your community, including the issues that exist, and the resources available
- Gain a greater understanding of poverty and disadvantage and how it impacts people's lives.

Qualities needed to perform the role

The role suits an adult of any age who would like to engage in service with others in their local community in a faith-based organisation. You will have:

- A genuine desire to serve those in need
- An ability to listen and respond without judging
- Sensitivity to the values of people of other faiths, cultures and lifestyles
- Interest in personal and spiritual growth through service with others
- Willingness to join with others to make a difference
- Willingness to support the Society's mission and vision and the Catholic ethos of the Society.

Time commitment

- Varies according to the Conference and the availability of the member. It could be from 1- 8 hours per week including a 1-hour meeting per fortnight.

Training and support

- Comprehensive orientation program using a mix of online and face-to-face methods
- Welcome, support and mentoring from the Conference President and other members
- The Vincentian Visitation Guidelines will be provided
- Access to the Vinnies Learning Centre to complete any mandatory training requirements
- Access to other opportunities to learn and grow within your role as a Conference member
- Conferences are supported by Member and Community Engagement Officers in regional offices.

How to get involved

- Meet with a member or members of the Conference to discuss your interest
- Complete an application form
- Complete a Working with Children and National Criminal History Check

The Conference President or his or her delegate will speak with the two people you nominate as referees on your application form and will also have a face-to-face conversation with you before you commence.