

Greetings Fellow Vincentians,

It is past time that I wrote again. As the threat of Covid appears to recede we as Vincentians are endeavouring to return to some sort of normal. Most conferences have renewed services to those in most need in our community. The Holy Spirit guides us as we do God's work amongst the most needy.

This week we had three visitors to Wagga Wagga. Jack de Groot, CEO of Vinnies, Ray Mouwad, Interim Executive Director Members and Volunteers and Justin Walsh Executive Director to the State Council. Ray is filling in the position that was filled by Elaine Griffin until recently and Justin's position is new and is basically to support a direct link between the membership (through Central Council Presidents and Vice Presidents) and the State Council. They are travelling to all Central Councils to listen to what our needs and dreams are.

They arrived in Wagga Wagga by plane at 8am. After breakfast we visited Micah Hub to meet with a number of the volunteers there. From Micah Hub we moved on to Edel Quinn to listen to any concerns they have, plus for them, especially Jack to pay their respects at the recent passing of Nathalie Prentice. We then journeyed to the board room at the diocesan office in Peter St to meet with the Central Council members and other specific members to express our needs and concerns to our visitors.

The discussions were quite broad as you might expect. Some of them I have related below:

- **Communication:** There was a time when the Society operated silently among the community but in these days of social media and greater scrutiny we need to be more open about what we do and how we spend the money that is donated to us.
- **Accommodation:** This is an increasing problem, especially out west where there are often numbers of itinerant workers and backpackers looking for employment. Also more social and affordable housing, such as we have built at Albury is in high demand.
- **Permisses:** Some of the premises that our members use in regional towns are in poor condition. They need some work done to them. We are assured that a review of all premises is under way.
- **Budgets:** This is the first year that we have budgets in the Wagga Wagga diocese. There were many questions and a lot of work needs to be done before the end of this financial year.

Some of the issues were more local such as the bushfire relief in Tumbarumba and the continuing drought relief out west. It was a very informative day and an opportunity for members concerns to be communicated, spoken about and listened to.

Griffith conference, contains about 20 members. In a lot of ways it is indistinguishable from other conferences across the diocese. They do "good works" across their community as we all do. But they lobby the local council for the temporary accommodation that is sorely needed in their town. They raise thousands of dollars each with street stalls and other fund raising ventures. Every meeting they have a secret collection so that all members are

able to contribute. They say they are blessed with a supportive community but they ensure that their community has plenty of opportunity to express that financial support.

I received the following report from Shannan Carey. It speaks for itself:

## St Sebastian's Youth Conference in Wagga



St Sebastian's Youth Conference members L-R: Nicholas Marinac, Jack Walsh, Grace Rosser (Youth Representative for Wagga Central Council), Shannan Carey (Conference President) (with sunglasses on), Annabelle Croaker, Deagan Newell, Jacqui Malcolm, Marina Gabra (Secretary), Kiri Taupo. Other members not in photo: Aiden Scoble, Zac Scoble, Sophie Hanlon, Blade Glass.

Vinnies has recently established a Young Adults group in Wagga Wagga, called a 'Youth Conference' (16-35 yrs). It is a social justice action group, aiming to make a difference locally to alleviate poverty, with Youth leading the change themselves.

Youth Conferences have been established for many years in Campbelltown and Wollongong areas.

The Wagga Youth Conference began its volunteer service by keeping the delivery of food hampers going during the Covid19 closures. Vinnies Youth helped to keep these basic material aid deliveries flowing to low income families in need.

When Covid19 restrictions ease, the Youth Conferences is planning on running 'Buddies Days' for children and youth from disadvantaged and low-socio economic backgrounds. Buddies Days are a 1 day outing somewhere

any day in NSW the Society helps thousands of people through Home Visitation, Hospital Visitation, Prison Visitation, Homeless Services for Men, Women and families, Migrant and Refugee Assistance, Support for those living with a mental illness, Supported Employment Services for People with an intellectual and other disabilities, Vinnies Centres, Disaster Relief, Disaster Recovery, Budget Counselling and Youth Programs.

exciting - zoo, movie, beach, laser tag, sports, ice skating, concert, Sport and Rec Centre, or similar – for up to 40 children each day, often in the school holidays.

The day involves the fun outing, which is often something the children would ordinarily not be able to afford or access and therefore 'expands their horizons' a little, as well as food and drink and the chance to bond with other children.

Importantly, the day also involves the Youth Conference members actively taking an interest in the children and forming caring, safe relationships with the children - hence the name 'Buddies Days'.

Children aged 5-12 years can be referred to the Youth Conference from Vinnies services and Conference members who know of low-income families needing support. Sometimes schools also refer children. Referral information will be sent to Conferences in Wagga shortly. Look out for more information.

Go Vinnies Youth!

### **Spiritual Reflection:**

With this newsletter I will leave you with a task, rather than a reflection.

Follow this link and join in the prayers and reflections:

<https://clicktopray.org/>

God bless

Peter Burgess