



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NSW  
*good works*

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

# Consultation report

2024 Strategy formulation

By Strategy team

October 2022

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## Introduction

### Background

As part of the development of the 2024-2028 strategy, we have conducted consultations with stakeholders to better understand perspectives about aspirations and impact and to identify the key challenges affecting the Society. This report focusses on:

- our people's aspiration for the Society's strategic vision and impact
- challenges our people are facing (members, employees and volunteers) that we should consider in the next strategy
- how we are perceived by our clients, partners and the wider community and any issues to consider in strategy development.

### Methodology

We conducted:

- a strategic visioning session at the Senior Leaders forum
- regional consultation across 15 locations and 2 online sessions
- consultation with the people we assist and the wider community through focus groups and surveying the people we assist, as well as surveying community partners and supporters
- a confidential survey directed to employees, members and volunteers.

## Senior Leaders Forum

We commenced wider strategy development consultation across the Society at the senior leaders' forum in June 2022. Participants discussed their vision for the next 10 years, guided by a visioning canvas and then shared and marked on canvases around the room the points that most resonated with them. The themes they discussed were our impact, value propositions, the people we reach, our people, no-go zones, key partners and supporters and actions.

### *Our impact*

Participants expressed that by 2032, our impact will be that we:

- strengthen and empower people and communities to break cycles of poverty and disadvantage
- have met our net-zero target for environmental sustainability
- are an innovative service provider, servicing people experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness
- advocate for structural, legislative change and influence government and social policy
- provide best practice wrap around support for the whole client journey
- are a leader in emergency recovery and build resilience in communities
- are a leading volunteer organisation.

### *Value propositions*

Senior leaders envisioned that by 2032, our value propositions will be that we:

- support and resource a skilled, more youthful and diverse volunteer base and members
- have an extended grassroots footprint across all communities in NSW, which includes our Conference and retail presence
- provide person-centred, holistic interventions that are personal, respectful and dignifying – mobile multi-disciplinary services allow us to provide wraparound holistic supports
- are a household name for service provision, with high public awareness of our service provision
- are influential – our impact and data is used in policy spaces and influences public debate
- are flexible and able to respond to emerging needs – we deliver the right services in the right locations
- are independent – our commercial and social enterprises support our financial sustainability.

### *People we reach*

Participants reflected that the people we assist will encompass:

- new forms of poverty
- people with complex needs
- people in financial stress
- women (especially older women)
- people affected by natural disasters
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds (migrants and refugees)
- First Australians
- most marginalised families
- more people experiencing housing stress and homelessness
- more people with disability
- more people experiencing mental health issues.

And that we should offer them:

- sustained outcomes
- transformative outcomes
- supports that preserve their dignity
- non-judgmental services
- wrap-around support.

#### *Our people*

Senior leaders expressed that by 2032, we should:

- reflect the communities we serve
- be younger and more diverse
- collaborate more – less siloed
- be innovative, flexible, adaptive and responsive
- work together to achieve outcomes
- have a constructive culture – critical thinking, individual leadership, intellectual curiosity, entrepreneurial, progressive, current, relevant, ‘give a damn’, accountable
- are culturally aware
- be skilled – ongoing learning and support
- have more First Australians and women in leadership
- celebrate our successes.

#### *Actions*

Senior leaders identified actions that would contribute to the 2032 vision.

#### *Impact*

- Increase awareness of what Vinnies do and the impact to the community
- Service the whole spectrum of homelessness
- Delivery of social-affordable housing with wraparound services
- Successfully advocate for more funding for affordable housing
- Provide wrap around support for the whole client journey
- Provide continuity and standardisation of service delivery
- Implement robust measurement against an outcomes framework
- Leverage members into areas of greatest need
- Define and create volunteer opportunities
- Conduct ongoing external needs analysis
- Develop performance-based/accountable culture
- Agree on client pathways, then develop resources to promote this

#### *Our people, systems and processes*

- Training of our people (cultural and mental health)
- Celebrate our people, our achievements
- Internal skills analysis
- Cultural change of how we incorporate volunteers and members
- Re-design our HR function to include member and volunteers
- Targets on First Australians in leadership within three years (minimum of First Nations population in NSW)
- Targets on younger number of members and volunteers in two years >60%

- Best practice HR processes for onboarding and recruitment
- Simplified governance and decision-making structures
- Define and create volunteer opportunities, connecting platforms demand and supply

#### Key enablers

- Invest in an integrated IT ecosystem (employees and volunteers)
- More investment in impact reporting and research
- Use data and evidence to inform clear, timely decisions (our people, processes, structure, what we want to offer)
- Increase our research and advocacy team
- Implement AI and digital platforms for services and retail
- Invest in new commercial businesses
- Set up service kiosks at shops
- Increase our culture of fundraising
- Campaign to advertise Vinnies as a top service provider
- Increase brand recognition and awareness
- Plan to strengthen gaps with partners and collaborators
- Implement marketing strategies localised and targeted for funders, donors, people we assist cohorts.

## Regional consultation

We conducted strategy consultations in Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Warrawong, Gosford, Sydney, Penrith, Dubbo, Bathurst, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Tamworth, Waitara and Woolloomooloo, an online session for members of the Wilcannia-Forbes Central Council, and a general online session for members. The sessions were well attended, with between around 14 and 30 participants attending each session, with close to 300 members, volunteers and employees providing input. There is one additional session to take place on 15 October 2022 with the membership Youth Committee.

During each session, we invited participants to reflect on the following questions:

#### **Strategic vision – the destination we expect to reach**

- *People we reach:* In 2028, who will be the people we assist? What are their needs?
- *Our social impact:* What do we want the people we assist to achieve with our support?
- *The Society:* What does the Society look like? How do we all contribute to achieve more for the people we assist?

#### **Actions – the course we take to reach our destination**

- *What other services would we like to see operate in our local area to better support the people we assist?*
- *What do we want to do better? What do we want to do more of?*
- *How can we better link our membership services and other operations so that the people we assist can achieve more with our support?*
- *What local support or partnerships would assist us to achieve more for the people we assist?*
- *Is there anything we should stop doing?*
- *How can we ensure the long-term sustainability of the Society to continue supporting the people we assist into the future?*

A summary of the discussions that took place during the sessions is provided below:

## Strategic vision

### People we expect to reach

Consultation participants noted that they expected the demographics of the people we assist in their local region to change. Groups reported that they expected to see increasing numbers of:

- people affected by the rising cost of living, who are in insecure work and/or low paid work; particularly single parent or single income families
- people in insecure housing, in addition to people experiencing homelessness
- people from diverse cultural backgrounds including immigrants, refugees, people on temporary visas, and seasonal and temporary workers
- older people as our population ages, particularly older single women experiencing poverty
- people with disability not covered by the NDIS
- people experiencing mental health issues, social isolation and emotional stress
- people affected by natural disasters
- people exiting institutionalised settings
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Almost all groups reported that the primary presenting need they expected to see would result from housing stress, specifically an **increasing number of people experiencing rental stress or rental insecurity; as well as people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.**

Other presenting needs anticipated included:

- the need for assistance with medical, housing and food costs due to the rising cost of living
- domestic and family violence
- social dislocation or social isolation
- disaster relief, including drought relief
- people with complex intersecting issues, including housing stress, drug and alcohol dependency and mental health concerns.

Participants expressed that, while the nature of presenting needs would not significantly shift, the magnitude and complexity of need would increase, with the housing crisis, the rising cost-of-living, increased mental and emotional distress and an increase in social isolation in our communities.

### Our social impact

Most participants reflected that, with the Society's support, they would like the people we assist to achieve:

- self-determination, agency and a sense of control of their own destiny
- an improved sense of hope, pride and dignity and improved well-being index results
- financial independence and to be less reliant on Vinnies, including learning skills to assist them break cycles of intergenerational poverty (life skills such as better financial management, household skills and healthy living)
- resilience to stand on their own feet and to know where to turn to for help
- social inclusion and integration into community
- housing stability and to break cycles of long-term homelessness.

Particular emphasis was made in most consultations on the aspiration and need to support sustained transformation for people experiencing poverty or disadvantage, **that we provide a ‘hand up’ as opposed to a ‘handout’**.

### The Society

Participants expressed that by 2028, the Society must continue to be respectful, accessible and welcoming to those in need. A significant theme emerging in all sessions was a ‘One Society’ approach, with the shared views being that:

- members, volunteers and employees should increasingly work together, led by our mission, with more understanding, communication and appreciation between people in different roles in the Society (as members, volunteers and employees)
- we must improve cross functional operations between members and employees, such as more effective referral pathways
- the Society will need to be more diverse, representative and inclusive of the various communities we serve
- there is a need to appeal to younger people to volunteer and become members – it was acknowledged this may mean working differently to attract members who would be available with different hours or may want to work in different modes to that of a traditional Conference
- we must improve supports for the onboarding and retention of both members and volunteers, and that volunteers could also delivering specialised services
- we must enable flexible opportunities to volunteer and volunteers using skills from their professions
- we need to do a better job of recognising and valuing volunteers and supporting their development
- we need to improve communication systems across the Society.

Regarding membership, participants expressed that:

- membership should better reflect the communities where we work (be more diverse)
- membership will need to adapt to social changes and have include more flexible membership models including specialised Conference models
- Conference work could include follow up beyond visitation to be more person-centred.

Another common theme across sessions was internal collaboration and partnerships. Participants said that we should:

- improve collaboration between services, for example, through broader hub networks
- work with other organisations to provide integrated services to the people we assist
- be more visible in our communities through local partnerships, including corporate partnerships.

### Actions

Other services we would like to see operate in our local area

The major themes about additional services included:

- a strong emphasis on housing solutions, including through potentially becoming a Specialist Housing Service provider in some areas; building and operating our own housing supply;

providing increased brokerage services to people at risk of homelessness; and providing wrap around services to people living in social housing

- additional services to meet the needs of people experiencing domestic violence (participants questioned whether members were appropriately skilled to do this well, and noted the need for referral pathways)
- additional mental health services and/or capacity to work with people with mental health issues
- additional capacity in our drug and alcohol programs; including specialised drug and alcohol rehabilitation for people with mental health concerns
- services that liaise with justice system pre-release
- more hub centres providing a range of services including life skills; legal services; and financial planning and counselling services
- mobile services offering wider reach across communities
- more social enterprises, with leverage from retail.

#### What we want to do better

The major themes included that we should:

- ensure service design not only responds to crisis, but works to assist clients break cycles of poverty
- consult with the people we assist about our services and find better approaches to providing support that achieves more effective outcomes
- ensure that there are processes for referral between membership and services
- build better connections into community; including community engagement plans; and better engagement with First Nations communities
- undertake more advocacy with local councils and local MPs, including for housing in local communities
- undertake more marketing and communication about the assistance we provide, including how our shops support our services
- provide cultural awareness and mental health awareness training
- do more to prevent crises before they arise (early intervention)
- ensure that we fully induct employees and members to all parts of the Society.

#### Linking membership services and other Vinnies operations

The major themes included:

- the importance of capturing and sharing stories from members and volunteers
- that we should build better linkages between members and services to support the management of complex cases; for example, with alcohol and drug services
- the importance of recognising the expertise of our members
- the importance of better employee and member collaboration
- the need to ensure effective communication with members, with some suggesting the cascade method does not always work effectively.

#### Local support and partnerships

The major themes included the benefit of the following local partnerships:

- increased active support from parish priests and working more closely with parishes
- local schools' liaison
- partnerships with Aboriginal support centres and mental health services
- connections with the justice system
- connections with medical services and the Local Health District
- connections with local interagency meetings and other local charities
- connections with government agencies such as the Department of Communities and Justice; the Multicultural Council; and local government
- local corporate involvement.

#### What we should stop doing

The major themes included that we should stop:

- provision of handouts and instead support better life skills that aid clients to break cycles of disadvantage
- being so generalist and instead focus on current relevant needs
- any service duplication (internal or external)
- the requirements of checks and training being an inhibitor to attracting and retaining volunteer and member support
- the 'members and volunteers versus employees' culture that reduces our client focus
- siloed operations.

#### Ensuring long-term sustainability

The major themes included:

- the importance of letting people know what we are doing; effective marketing of our services including through videos; effective marketing of our membership/volunteer base as our point of difference
- that we should consider ways to fundraise in local communities more effectively
- being open to new ways of operating while staying true to our Vincentian principles; more volunteering opportunities outside of traditional hours
- recruitment of a more diverse and younger membership; and the targeted recruitment of members, particularly of young members and those reflective of the communities we serve
- that we should value and invest in development of members and volunteers; acknowledge the gift of time of members and volunteers; continuing to upskill and train long term Society people.

#### Regional consultations – key strategic findings and observations

Based on the input and feedback received at the consultation sessions and service visits, we have identified the main challenges and opportunities of strategic consideration that present across the state.

##### 'Less handouts, more hand up' – members' aspiration for social impact

Members strongly expressed their aspiration for the Society's work to transform people's lives through providing a 'hand up', so that people can achieve self-determination, independence, and resilience. This was voiced strongly through the visioning exercise, but also at other opportunities during the consultation sessions.

## Housing crisis

The effects of the housing crisis were heard strongly across all consultations. The shortage of housing leaves fewer options for the people we assist to achieve long-term stability and puts a higher number of people at risk of homelessness.

Members expressed that there needs to be a strong emphasis on housing services, with suggested responses including becoming a Specialist Housing Service provider in some areas; building and operating our own housing supply; providing increased brokerage services to people at risk of homelessness; providing wrap around services to people living in social housing; more hub centres providing a range of services including life skills; and early intervention supports to assist people in insecure housing such as legal services, financial planning, and counselling services.

## Social connectedness

Through the stories and feedback shared at the consultation sessions, it was observed that a fundamental impact of membership services is the creation of social connections and the positive effect this has in the overall wellbeing of the people we assist.

## Evolving membership

To sustain the member and volunteer foundations of the Society, opportunities to become a member and/or a volunteer will have to evolve to become more flexible and to adapt to social changes. Additionally, feedback from consultations shows that there is a strong desire for members, volunteers and employees to work closer together to achieve better outcomes for the people we assist.

## Localised responses

While there was an overall shared vision and understanding of emerging needs across the state, it is recognised that each local context is unique and requires localised responses. Some of the examples provided at the consultations were the need to conduct local advocacy, to work with local organisations to provide integrated services, to be more visible in our communities through local partnerships (including corporate partnerships), to fundraise locally and to engage with local First Nations communities.

## Local operational challenges

Several local operational challenges were also communicated at the consultation sessions, which will be communicated to Regional Directors and Central Council Presidents for their consideration.

## Consultation surveys

### Our People survey

We received 176 responses to Our People survey. This consisted of 124 employees, 35 members and 21 volunteers.

### *Aspirations for the Society's impact*

The number one aspiration for the Society's impact was to 'provide preventive, hand up or circuit breaker services empowering individuals to improve their personal situation and divert from a path to poverty/disadvantage' with 42% of people selecting this as one of their top three priorities.

When considering members responses only, the highest priority was to 'have a vibrant and growing cohort of well-resourced members supporting people in need in their local communities', followed

by ‘we support individuals to get on and live with dignity’, which was also the number one response from volunteers.

Table 1. Survey responses to question ‘In the next five to ten years, what are your aspirations for the Society’s impact for the people we assist and our communities? (Select your top three priorities)’.

	All %	Employees %	Members %	Volunteers %
We provide preventive, hand up or circuit breaker services empowering individuals to improve their personal situation and divert from a path to poverty/disadvantage	42.0%	40.3%	45.7%	47.6%
We influence government and social policy by advocating for structural, legislative change	38.6%	40.3%	40.0%	23.8%
We support individuals to get on and live with dignity	33.0%	25.8%	48.6%	52.4%
We support and resource skilled and diverse employees, volunteers and members that reflect the communities we serve	29.5%	35.5%	11.4%	14.3%
We provide a support to those in immediate need or danger (emergency/crisis relief)	27.3%	23.4%	34.3%	47.6%
We provide services that result in social transformation by empowering individuals and/or communities and building local capacity	26.1%	27.4%	20.0%	23.8%
We have a vibrant and growing cohort of well-resourced members supporting people in need in their local communities	25.0%	16.1%	54.3%	38.1%
Our financial sustainability is enabled by thriving retail, fundraising and commercial enterprises that allow us to sustainably deliver on our mission	24.4%	28.2%	11.4%	19.0%
We are a household name for social service provision, with high public awareness of our service provision	19.9%	22.6%	17.1%	14.3%
We build resilience in communities and are a leader in emergency recovery	13.1%	16.1%	5.7%	4.8%
We have met our net-zero target for environmental sustainability	10.2%	12.9%	2.9%	4.8%
Other (please specify)	5.7%	4.8%	8.6%	4.8%

### *Vision for services*

The number one response regarding the vision for our services was to ‘ensure better outcomes for our clients by providing best practice wrap-around supports’ with 57% of people selecting this as one of their top three priorities.

This was followed by ‘increased transformational service approaches that break cycles of poverty and disadvantage’ with 44%.

Table 2. Survey responses to question ‘What is your vision for the direction of our services within the next five to ten years? (Select your top three priorities)’.

	All %	Employees %	Members %	Volunteers %
Ensure better outcomes for our clients by providing best practice wrap-around supports	57.4%	58.9%	57.1%	52.4%
Increased transformational service approaches that break cycles of poverty and disadvantage	44.3%	42.7%	42.9%	52.4%
Continue to inform policy and influence government to enact systematic change	32.4%	29.0%	48.6%	19.0%
Improved outreach capacity to reach people where there is more need	31.3%	30.6%	25.7%	47.6%
Extended provision of services to more people, particular to known disadvantaged locations	29.5%	26.6%	31.4%	38.1%
Ensure better alignment between membership and Vinnies Services	24.4%	27.4%	42.9%	33.3%
Increase our capacity to incorporate person-centred co-design into our services	14.8%	18.5%	5.7%	4.8%
Specialised provision of fewer services	14.2%	16.9%	5.7%	14.3%

Implement new innovative models of care	14.2%	17.7%	2.9%	4.8%
Increased and better structured disaster response services	11.9%	14.5%	11.4%	0.0%
Continued provision of our services as they are	10.2%	9.7%	11.4%	9.5%
Other (please specify)	5.7%	4.0%	11.4%	9.5%

#### *What we need to do to realise our vision from a service perspective*

The number one response regarding actions from a service perspective was to ‘increase our people's capabilities to deliver better service approaches (community development, strengths-based, mental health, trauma-informed, etc.)’ with 60% of people selecting this as one of their top three priorities.

This was followed by ‘better engage members and volunteers to deliver better outcomes for the people we assist – increase collaboration in service delivery’ with 49%.

Table 3. Survey responses to question ‘Given your aspirations and vision for the future, and from a service perspective, what do we need to do more of, less of, differently, or start to do in order to make progress toward achieving the aspirations and vision selected above? (Select your top three priorities)’.

	All %	Employees %	Members %	Volunteers %
Increase our people's capabilities to deliver better service approaches (community development, strengths-based, mental health, trauma-informed, etc.)	59.7%	66.1%	54.3%	38.1%
Better engage members and volunteers to deliver better outcomes for the people we assist – increase collaboration in service delivery	49.4%	39.5%	82.9%	61.9%
Implement flexible models of membership so that we can attract new members and provide more support to the people we assist	43.8%	33.9%	62.9%	76.2%
Incorporate transformative service delivery approaches such as early intervention and community development	39.8%	45.2%	22.9%	33.3%
Improve data collection and use of data to better monitor, evaluate and be accountable for our service outcomes	34.1%	37.1%	17.1%	28.6%
Implement robust measurement against an outcomes framework	15.9%	19.4%	8.6%	4.8%
Implement a research and evaluation function to allow us to be more responsive to need, incorporate best practice and evaluate our programs	15.3%	35.5%	14.3%	33.3%
Other (please specify)	11.9%	9.7%	17.1%	19.0%

#### *What we need to do to realise vision from an organisational capacity perspective*

The number one response regarding actions from an organisational perspective was to ‘increase awareness of what Vinnies do and the impact in the community’ with 58% of people selecting this as one of their top three priorities. This was higher for members (66%), together with ‘provide more opportunities to strengthen our spirituality’ (also 66%, 22% overall).

The number two response overall was to ‘increase our capacity to partner with other organisations’, which was a priority for 51% of total respondents.

Table 4. Survey response to question: ‘Given your aspirations and vision for the future, and from an organisational perspective, what do we need to do more of, less of, differently, or start to do in order to make progress toward achieving the aspirations and vision selected above? (Select your top three priorities)’.

	All %	Employees %	Members %	Volunteers %
Increase awareness of what Vinnies do and the impact in the community	58.0%	58.1%	65.7%	52.4%
Increase our capacity to partner with other organisations	50.6%	52.4%	45.7%	52.4%
Create more volunteer opportunities and pathways to membership and/or employment	38.1%	31.5%	54.3%	57.1%
Plan to ensure financial sustainability	29.5%	33.1%	20.0%	14.3%
Implement organisational outcomes performance monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning	25.6%	30.6%	8.6%	14.3%
Develop and implement data analytics - use data and evidence to inform clear, timely decisions (service provision, retail, fundraising, our people, processes, structure)	22.7%	25.8%	2.9%	28.6%
Provide more opportunities to strengthen our tradition and spirituality	22.2%	9.7%	65.7%	38.1%
Prioritise income generation activity that will allow us to continue to deliver on our mission (retail, fundraising and commercial enterprises)	21.6%	27.4%	8.6%	4.8%
More investment in impact reporting, monitoring and evaluation	11.4%	12.9%	2.9%	4.8%
Other (please specify)	6.3%	4.8%	11.4%	9.5%

### *Strengths and weaknesses*

47% of survey respondents said that major strength of the organisation is that ‘we are flexible and able to respond to emerging needs’ and 38% said that a major strength is that ‘we have an extended grassroots footprint across all communities in NSW, which includes our Conference and retail presence’.

Table 5. Survey response to question: ‘What are the major strengths of our organisation? (Select up to three)’.

	All %	Employees %	Members %	Volunteers %
We are flexible and able to respond to emerging needs	46.6%	49.2%	37.1%	47.6%
We have an extended grassroots footprint across all communities in NSW, which includes our Conference and retail presence	38.1%	40.3%	34.3%	28.6%
We are prepared to work with people with complex needs and marginalised communities	33.5%	37.1%	25.7%	19.0%
We are able to provide holistic care	27.8%	30.6%	14.3%	33.3%
We have a network of members and volunteers	27.3%	27.4%	22.9%	33.3%
We have independence due to our ability to source our own funding – commercial and social enterprises are embedded in our retail and services to support our financial sustainability	21.0%	15.3%	40.0%	23.8%
Other (please specify)	19.9%	16.9%	28.6%	23.8%
We have a strong brand	18.8%	16.1%	22.9%	28.6%
We can work across a continuum of need from crisis to stability	14.2%	16.1%	11.4%	4.8%
We are a generalist service provider	13.6%	13.7%	14.3%	14.3%

Regarding weaknesses, respondents cited ‘data collection and review practices are inadequate to measure some outcomes’ (58%) and ‘lack of service outcomes performance orientation to monitor, evaluate and be accountable for targets’ (51%) as our major weaknesses. For members, the most selected weakness was that ‘we are not good at responding to the changing needs of our customers’ with 66%.

Table 6. Survey response to question: 'What are the major weaknesses? (Select up to three)'.

	All %	Employees %	Members %	Volunteers %
Data collection and review practices are inadequate to measure some outcomes	58.0%	58.1%	65.7%	52.4%
Lack of service outcomes performance orientation to monitor, evaluate and be accountable for targets	50.6%	52.4%	45.7%	52.4%
Our processes could be more efficient	38.1%	31.5%	54.3%	57.1%
Siloed operations in some areas of the organisation	29.5%	33.1%	20.0%	14.3%
We don't incorporate best practice in some services	25.6%	30.6%	8.6%	14.3%
Lack of an access point/ front door in locations of most need	22.7%	25.8%	2.9%	28.6%
We are not good at responding to the changing needs of our customers	22.2%	9.7%	65.7%	38.1%
Current transformational impact of some services is low	21.6%	27.4%	8.6%	4.8%
Geographical-based governance structure with inequality of resources	11.4%	12.9%	2.9%	4.8%
Other (please specify)	6.3%	4.8%	11.4%	9.5%

Regarding aspirations, vision, and what we need to focus on, common themes emerging in those responses were the need to:

- establish more accommodation services and permanent housing in the communities
- provide tailored wrap around services in the community, including through partnering with other organisations
- increase capacity for all of our people to incorporate best practice approaches in service delivery (trauma informed, strengths-based, etc.)
- create flexible membership and volunteering models to attract and retain more people
- strengthen our data collection and outcome measurement, and to incorporate research and evaluation into service delivery.
- spend more time face to face with clients, which has been affected by additional administration, paperwork and reporting and consider administrative burdens on frontline workers
- reconsider pricing in our retail shops - particularly in regional areas
- better communicate and promote our service offerings.

### People we assist survey

We received 56 responses to the client survey, including 4 from Greater Sydney, 17 from the North East region, 2 from the North West and 22 from the South region. Key points of interest are listed below:

#### Reason for choosing Vinnies

86% of clients said that they accessed Vinnies through a referral from another service and 54% chose Vinnies because it is close to them or easily accessible.

Table 7. Survey responses to question: 'Why did you choose Vinnies instead of another service? (select up to three options)'

I was referred to Vinnies by another service	85.7%
The service was close to me/easily accessible	53.6%
Vinnies is a well-known and trusted service provider	46.4%
I know Vinnies welcomes everyone	39.3%
Other (please specify)	19.6%
I was referred to Vinnies by a friend/family member	16.1%

I did not have another option/it was the only service available	14.3%
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### *What services they would like to see more of*

Surveyed clients expressed that they would like:

- more housing supports and access to housing
- supports with advocacy and legal matters
- longer hours of operation for some services
- improved safety for those living in social housing and experiencing domestic violence
- emotional support, as this has been valuable for them
- more assistance with completing forms and documents

### *What needs improvement*

Clients were asked what is not working and needs improvement. 15% said that Vinnies does not communicate well the services it provides. 28 clients provided a comment, some of which are included below:

- *Govt funding would be beneficial to assist service users, the homeless situation is increasing in this area. Pete's Place would benefit from having on site mental health services during all opening hours, as there is an increase of instances where people with drug induced mental health issues are impacting on the experience of other uses, to the point where some people experiencing homelessness will not even access the service due to feeling unsafe and in danger.*
- *Pete's needs more funding because I feel like they do so much with so little and the impact they make for the community with what they have is immense.*
- *No complaints whatsoever - staff always listen, with their eyes too. I can't wait till I can come back and help out.*
- *Level of physical and verbal violence is worrying. If there was more staff and more rules and regulations - eg 3 steps and you're out - banning needs more 2 weeks. If someone is banned, they should not be allowed near the establishment for the period of the ban. If people keep reoffending, there should be a lifetime ban.*
- *It gets really crowded and when it's crowded, and people get really upset. Need more space and more case workers to help people get accommodation. We get vouchers and clothes but no one helps us get housed.*
- *Mission Australia visit Pete's Place and don't even notice me and that I need accommodation. Vinnies need funding from the Government to uphold the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights that housing is for everyone.*
- *Vinnies' more availability to talk informally and check in with me.*
- *Better infrastructure, more toilets, few more showers, better space*
- *Sometimes someone do not know how to treat mental health breakdown.*
- *Accommodation, more showers, more laundry machines.*
- *The service is very helpful however is experiencing threats from others since moving out of Vinnies accommodation - is residing in social housing.*
- *Sometimes it's hard to get through to the services phone lines.*

### *Wider community survey*

The wider community survey received 35 responses, of which five were from volunteers at a Vinnies shop, 6 from a community service partner, four from a collaborating government organisation, three

from a corporate partner, nine from shop customers and six from other community members not currently involved with Vinnies. Key points of interest are listed below:

- 40% said that they are involved with Vinnies as Vinnies is a well-known and trusted service provider and a further 23% said that the service was close to them/easily accessible.
- 54% acknowledged that at Vinnies everyone is welcomed and treated with care, respect and dignity and 48% said that our advocacy is ineffective in influencing changes in social policy.
- 23% said that something that needs improvement is that Vinnies does not communicate its impact very well.
- Some of the comments provided under ‘what needs improvement’ were:
  - *As all our organisations have discussed we have to continue to work out ways we can communicate what is happening, and impacts, to the community.*
  - *Accommodation services.*
  - *Promoting the great work could improve.*
  - *There is a growing trend in charity outlets to become more a seller of boutique vintage and quality goods with prices marked up accordingly, this destroys the object of these stores which is to offer the community a very valuable choice of low priced affordable good and quality used goods/items.*
  - *As an attendee of the CEO sleepout the most impactful part of the event is learning of the support offered and the stories of those that receive that support.*
  - *Prices seem high.*
  - *I would like to see a recruitment campaign for volunteers to address the current shortage of helpers.*
  - *More people should be encouraged to work with aged, disabled and homeless as a positive career.*
  - *More focus needs to be on Central Western NSW Vinnies shops, higher Management need to visit these centres to see the major differences between metropolitan Vinnies Centres and regional Vinnies centres.*
  - *Would really help if clothing was put in size not colour. Some people won't take the time to look through everything. The store has something for everyone.*

Regarding what we should achieve in the next 5-10 years, 46% of respondents selected that we should ‘support individuals to get on and live with dignity’, and 43% selected ‘provide services that result in social transformation by empowering individuals and/or communities and building local capacity’.

Table 8. Survey responses to question: ‘What are we doing that’s great? (Select up to three options)’

At Vinnies everyone is welcomed and treated with care, respect and dignity	54.3%
Vinnies advocacy for people experiencing disadvantage – it is effective in influencing change in social policy	45.7%
Vinnies has a positive impact on individuals and communities	40.0%
Vinnies works with the most marginalised and disadvantaged individuals and communities	37.1%
Vinnies shops – they’re good value for money, have a place in our communities, etc.	31.4%
The service provided is of a high standard and professional	17.1%
Accessing Vinnies is easy and effective	14.3%
Other (please specify)	8.6%
Vinnies fundraising campaigns seek to raise funds for issues that matter to me	5.7%
Vinnies communicates its impact and tells good stories through social media and traditional media	0.0%

Table 9. Survey responses to question: 'What isn't working and needs improvement? (Select up to three options)'

Other (please specify)	60.0%
Vinnies does not communicate its impact very well	22.9%
Vinnies fundraising campaigns do not seek to address contemporary social issues	14.3%
Vinnies shops – they're not good value for money, do not have a place in our communities, etc.	8.6%
Vinnies does not have a positive impact on individuals and communities	8.6%
Accessing Vinnies is difficult and not very effective	5.7%
Vinnies advocacy for people experiencing disadvantage is not effective in influencing change in social policy	5.7%
The service provided is not of a high standard and/or professional	2.9%
Vinnies does not work with the most marginalised and disadvantaged individuals and communities	2.9%
At Vinnies not everyone is welcomed and/or treated with care, respect and dignity	0.0%

Table 10. Survey responses to question: 'In the next five to ten years, what are the top three things Vinnie should achieve? (Select up to three options)'

Support individuals to get on and live with dignity	45.7%
Provide services that result in social transformation by empowering individuals and/or communities and building local capacity	42.9%
Continue to influence government and social policy by advocating for structural, legislative change	40.0%
Support and resource a skilled, youthful, and diverse employee, volunteer and members that reflect the communities we serve	40.0%
Ensure financial sustainability to continue to deliver social impact by cultivating a thriving retail, fundraising and commercial enterprises	28.6%
Be a household name for social service provision, with high public awareness of Vinnies service provision	22.9%
Provide preventive, hand up or circuit breaker services empowering individuals to improve their personal situation and divert from a path to poverty/disadvantage	22.9%
Build resilience in communities and be a leader in emergency recovery	11.4%
Meet net-zero carbon emission target for environmental sustainability	5.7%
Other (please specify)	2.86%

## Next steps

The next ELT strategy session to be held on 12 October 2022. Input from consultations and surveys will be incorporated into the 2024-2028 strategic vision and goals.

Consider the following discussion points:

- How will our next strategy enable members and volunteers to provide supports that contribute to people achieving self-determination, independence and resilience?
- What changes are required so that our services not only respond to crisis, but also assist clients to break out of crisis cycles with dignity and respect?
- The housing crisis concerns expressed across the state will require a thorough response, particularly in view of the next strategy development. What will be our response and how can we best utilise our resources to create the biggest impact?
- With a growing number of people experiencing mental health challenges or emotional distress and the increasing social isolation being experienced in our communities: can we better recognise and measure the impact that social connectedness has on the people we assist, as well as the contribution of membership services in achieving positive connectedness and wellbeing outcomes?

- Could we incorporate more structured social connectedness and inclusion supports across the Society supported by members and volunteers?
- How can our Conference models and membership services be adapted to provide more flexible opportunities for members and volunteers?
- Can greater integration between membership services and Vinnies Services offer more flexible opportunities to volunteer (for example: broader hub networks, clearer referral pathways, specialised volunteering opportunities)?
- The grassroots nature of membership services are well placed to work in transforming our communities at the local level – what supports can be provided to enable localised responses?
- How can we enable service delivery and collaboration in regions where there are not services available (for example: mobile outreach services, remote delivery)?