



North Sydney Our Lady of the Way Conference Members

## Sydney Archdiocese Central Council President - John Walden's Message

*My fellow Members, Staff and Volunteers*

There have been quite a few developments initiated by the Central Council since the start of this year. I will mention a few of them.

### **Twinning with the Northern Region of Fiji.**

We have now officially twinned with the Northern Region in Fiji. We look forward to mutual benefits for both Councils from this arrangement. The Northern Region President has already attended (online) our February 2025 Central Council meeting. We have also sent the first twinning payments covering the first quarter of 2025 and Easter. Once some administrative matters are resolved we look forward to assisting the Northern Region with any special projects it may put forward. This twinning arrangement naturally followed on from the twinning of the NSW State Council with the National Council of Fiji mid last year.

### **Welfare assistance and home visitation guidelines**

After extensive consultation and several draft versions, the guidelines for the administering of welfare assistance and conducting home visitations were finalised and adopted. These guidelines are in the process of being adopted across the State, with variations to be adopted for local circumstances where applicable.

### **Social Justice and the forthcoming Federal election**

Social justice representatives from the Membership, staff and volunteers are now actively involved in meeting with sitting Members and aspiring candidates about several issues, especially housing and cost of living. National Office material has been made available and distributed where meetings have been held, or candidates need more information on these matters.

I am mindful that by the time this newsletter is published, we will be heading into deep autumn with winter just around the corner. This is one of the peak periods in the year for assistance, especially with power bills for heating. If we keep in mind those people we assist at this time of the year and the struggles they endure.

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Safeguarding

For advice and information  
contact Vinnies Safeguarding  
Team on:

phone: **1800 4SUPPORT (1800 478 776)**

## Easter Reflection

Easter is a time of renewal, hope, and compassion, reminding us of the importance of kindness, generosity, and service to others. It calls people to reflect on themes of sacrifice, love, and community, inspiring many to reach out and support those in need.

In the spirit of Easter, we can reflect that the Society embodies these values through dedicated work in assisting those who are vulnerable and most rejected or marginalised. Easter reminds us that small acts of kindness can lead to transformation, not only in the lives of those we help but also in our own hearts.

This is a beautiful way the Society can reflect the true meaning of Easter through their commitment to social justice, compassion, and respect for all people. By providing food, clothing, housing support, and companionship to those experiencing hardship, Vinnies brings hope and dignity to countless individuals and families.

Our Members, employees and volunteers work tirelessly to ensure that no one feels forgotten or isolated, especially during significant times like Easter. This continues to remind us that celebrating Easter goes beyond tradition – it means living out values of love, charity, and service in everyday life.

**Corinne Lindsell, Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care Partner - Metro**



### Metro Acting Regional Director - Louis Hearnden

It has been a privilege to step into the role of Acting Regional Director since February, while Ashvini Ambihapahar is on leave. Over the past few months, I've seen the extraordinary dedication of our Members, volunteers, and staff in bringing the mission of the Society to life.

One such story is from Eastwood Conference, where a newly arrived family found not just shelter, but a true home through the kindness of our Members. This generosity and swift action reflect the deep compassion and commitment that define the Society.

As we approach the colder months, we are also preparing for our Winter Appeal, which focuses on the rising risk of homelessness across NSW. Over 122,000 people are experiencing homelessness in Australia, with 35,000 in NSW. More people are at risk of losing their homes due to housing stress, with many facing the possibility of living in cars, couch surfing, or living in tents for the first time.

This year's Winter Appeal will address homelessness by supporting early intervention programs that prevent homelessness before it starts. Funds raised will directly support our core work, providing vital assistance to people at risk of homelessness and poverty. I would like to thank our dedicated Members for their role in raising funds for this critical appeal. The Winter Appeal will launch on 1 May 2025, with materials available from 17 April 2025.

*Your continued dedication is changing lives.*

# CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2024



## Christmas across the Sydney Archdiocese

### NORTH SYDNEY CONFERENCE

The North Sydney Conference took a different approach to their Christmas Hampers. Instead of large hampers of food, each client received a gift bag with a gift card, a personalised letter and a few festive treats donated by Marist College North Shore and One Meal, allowing them to do their own Christmas shopping! This new method made it easier for more Members to get involved in packing and delivering the hampers, and also gave the people we assist autonomy over the food themselves and their families celebrated with. Members also prepared ten family food hampers for the Emerton region, and Parish Priest, Fr Sacha, popped in to collect them and deliver them. Members were also able to gift ten North Sydney families Westfield vouchers through the generous support of our Club Grant Partners, Norths. The day ended with morning tea, mince pies, and coffee, leaving everyone in good spirits!

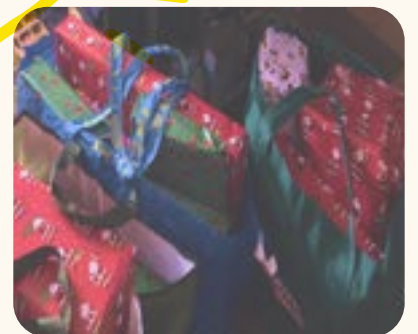


**Photos: North Sydney Conference Members and North Sydney Parish Priest, Sacha Bermudez-Goldman**



### PUNCHBOWL CONFERENCE

The 2024 Christmas Appeal was especially a generous year for Punchbowl Conference. The Conference is very grateful for the ongoing support of the St Jerome's Catholic Church Parish Priest and the community throughout the year.



The Members are filled with gratitude for the ongoing gift donation of the Reaiche family from the St Jerome's Church parish community. The St Jerome's Catholic Primary School gave various gift card donations from their fund-raising activities to support Vinnies. The school has contributed to the works of the Society in various other ways.

Punchbowl Conference also received a generous amount of donation from the Ephpheta Centre in Punchbowl validating the good works our mission has to the community.

We always say, we are here to help.

**Benni for all the Punchbowl Conference Members.**



# Christmas across the Sydney Archdiocese



## Carols by Candlelight/Community BBQ

The Sydney Regional President, Waterloo & Redfern Conference Members, Coordinators from Anna Alessi, Rozelle, Taylor Morrell, Kingsford, and Donna Boyd (Metro Team Leader) joined with Fr Paul to host Carols by Candlelight and a Community BBQ at our Lady of Mt Carmel Church, in Waterloo, following the Saturday Vigil Mass.

This event saw Members, parishioners and clients come together to celebrate the beauty of Christmas, and children were delighted with the small gifts provided, which were put together by Ruth Rawlinson (Finance & Operations Manager, Sydney City South Parish) and Donna.



**The staff at the Redfern VSC celebrated the end of the working year by hosting a Christmas lunch for Members and volunteers,** complete with Bon Bons and paper hats, to show their appreciation of the support provided throughout the year.

Members from South East Sydney, Sydney, and Rozelle regions came together to enjoy a well-deserved break after a hectic and fast-paced month providing assistance to those in need. The Regional Director, Ashvini Ambihaipahar also joined in the festivities and enjoyed the opportunity to converse with the Members and staff in a relaxed atmosphere.

## Rozelle Christmas BBQ

Rozelle region hosted their annual Christmas BBQ for people they support throughout the community. Blessed with beautiful weather, everyone had an enjoyable day with delicious food and great company. The highlight, however, was Santa's arrival with a sack full of toys for many excited children. As always, the Members enjoyed not just sharing in this event, but also preparing, cooking, and serving the lunch. The Rozelle Coordinator, Kingsford Coordinator and the Metro Team Leader were also in attendance to assist wherever needed. A great day!





## Corporate Volunteers – Crows Nest Vinnies Support Centre

Crows Nest Vinnies Support Centre hosted corporate volunteers from MLC, AMP and Channel 9 to lend a hand during the lead up to Christmas. Each team helped us sort through donations, organise our gift table for families we support, and tidy up our food pantry and storerooms. MLC spent most of the day supporting our retail team, but made time to help us sort through a mountain of Christmas food donations. Channel 9 decorated the VSC and put up a Christmas tree, adding a festive touch to the office! Channel 9 and AMP made thoughtful donations of gifts for our gift table, and AMP made a \$5000 donation directly to the centre. All teams did a fantastic job, and it was a great chance to share more about the work Vinnies does in the local community with our Corporate supporters.



## Working together to support people experiencing homelessness at Christmas



### St George Community Housing (SGCH) Pathways team attended the Crows Nest VSC to pack Christmas Hampers with the Support of Centre Volunteers for people in emergency accommodation experiencing homelessness in the local area.

Forty hampers were created and given out to people that Vinnies and SGCH were supporting together. Hampers included a mix of practical items, festive treats, and gifts for both children and adults. SGCH Staff and VSC volunteers were mindful that cooking facilities are often limited in emergency accommodation and took extra care to ensure all food items were suitable for those receiving the hampers.

This is the second year SGCH has participated in this activity, and each year we reflect on the difficult reality that, while it is heartbreaking to know people face homelessness during Christmas, there is comfort in the knowledge that agencies and volunteers come together to ensure these individuals feel remembered and cared for.

*Pictured: St George Community Housing, Pathways Team & Lauren Leahy, VSC Coordinator*





## SYDNEY REGION REDFERN VSC

Commencing in November, corporate volunteer groups from Channel 9, the Helia Group, IGA and Tandem Partners generously donated their time to assist with setting up our "Vinnies Christmas Cave. The teams worked tirelessly sorting through the many donations, packing Christmas hampers, and restocking the food and toiletries hamper rooms. IGA also donated a Christmas tree, which was beautifully decorated by volunteers, and included decorations handmade by IGA staff.

Throughout the month of December, Members, volunteers, and staff hosted the Vinnies Christmas Cave event at the Redfern VSC. This event saw Members from Sydney, Rozelle and South East Sydney regions come together to support families receiving gifts, toys, food, decorations, and Christmas items. They worked diligently each day to ensure Christmas hampers were packed as they were depleted and ensured that all items in the Christmas Cave were restocked daily. People visiting the Christmas Cave were also able to take the handmade decorations from the IGA Christmas tree to display on their own Christmas tree. The Christmas Cave initiative offers support that honours the dignity of each person by empowering them to choose their items for their children according to their personal preferences.

In the true spirit of Christmas giving, thanks to the generosity of Lindt Australia, everyone visiting the Redfern VSC throughout December was provided with delicious chocolates, which were appreciated by everyone. The staff and volunteers working at the reception counter truly enjoyed putting smiles on everyone's faces with this simple act of kindness.

### VIP Visitors to the Christmas Cave

*Tanya Plibersek MP and a member of her team visited the Vinnies Christmas Cave after receiving positive feedback regarding the initiative from people in the community.*



Tanya also had the opportunity to meet and speak with people we assist, who expressed to her the significance of this initiative and how it eases financial pressures for families during the Christmas season. Tanya expressed her appreciation to the staff and Members of the VSC for the support provided by Vinnies, not only during the Christmas period, but also to individuals and families throughout the community every day.

NRL - Terry Lamb – Daley M medal winner, multiple premierships won with Canterbury and Australian Representative.

NRLW - Elsie Albert – Captain of the Papua New Guinea Women's National team. Player for Parramatta Eels in NRL women's premiership.

The players took pleasure in organising and arranging the toys on the tables for the upcoming Christmas Cave event.

## CONCORD WEST CONFERENCE

During our Christmas Appeal each year, our Conference works closely with St Ambrose Parish and with St Ambrose Primary School, Concord West and Our Lady of the Assumption Primary School, North Strathfield. We have developed a strong relationship with the RECs, Family Educators and Principals over many years. Both School Communities have active Mini Vinnies groups and are very supportive of Vinnies and generously provide food cards, gift cards and toiletries (and in previous years food) for our Christmas Hampers. At Christmas, their donations enabled us to not only provide hampers to our clients, but we also donated:

- 13 hampers shared between 5 local schools and distributed by each school directly to needy families; and
- \$1,060 in food and gift cards to Burwood VSC. We also donated food and gifts, which had been generously donated by the Parishioners of the St Ambrose Parish.

Many years ago, our Conference created a “School Liaison” role. Edel McKenna has been in that role for a few years and has done a fabulous job visiting the Schools throughout the year, participating in activities with Mini Vinnies and fostering the relationship between the Schools and our Conference. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of our local schools and the St Ambrose Parish, which assists us in serving the needy in our local community in the spirit of the Society.



## BURWOOD VINNIES SUPPORT CENTRE

Burwood VSC organised a Christmas event following the same concept as the Redfern Christmas cave. The Burwood Coordinator, along with Members, displayed toys and gifts in the VSC reception area, allowing people we assist to choose items to give their children for Christmas. They were present to oversee the initiative and provide assistance.

The Members and Coordinator ensured there were plenty of toys, gifts, Christmas hampers and chocolates, which brought much happiness to all who attended this festive event.



## A Fresh Start: Helping a Family Find Home



The call came in just before the Australia Day weekend—a request for help for a newly arrived family of three: a mother and her two adult daughters. They had landed in Australia not long ago, unfamiliar with the language, the systems, and the city they now called home. A family friend, acting as their voice, reached out for assistance.

The message was shared in our Eastwood Conference WhatsApp group. As the details unfolded, it became clear that this family had been staying in a local hotel since their arrival, likely with help from Housing Australia. Now, they had finally secured a rental home, but an empty house doesn't make a home. They needed beds to sleep in, a table to share meals, and the basics—kitchenware, a microwave, even a vacuum to keep their new space clean.

Without hesitation, our volunteers got to work. Within hours, emails were sent, calls were made, and arrangements were set in motion. A trusted removalist would deliver some furniture the day after Australia Day. Beds and white goods were ordered from our regular suppliers, scheduled to arrive just in time for their move-in.

But one challenge remained: their belongings. With no large furniture to move, just suitcases and bags packed with all they owned, hiring a truck seemed unnecessary. So, on the morning of Australia Day, our volunteers loaded up their own cars and personally transported the family's things to their new home. A home isn't just furniture—it's the warmth of a blanket, the comfort of clean sheets, the simple joy of having plates and cups for a family meal. So, on Tuesday, we made one final trip, picking up duvets, pillows, towels, and kitchen essentials from the West Ryde Centre and delivering them to the family. That day, their house became a home. And though their journey in Australia was only beginning, they wouldn't be facing it alone.

**Elmarie O'Regan -Member, Eastwood Conference**

## Support available for Members and Volunteers

We understand that sometimes challenging situations can arise. That's why we're highlighting the availability of our **Converge Support Program**. Converge offers **confidential support services to all our members and volunteers**. We encourage you to explore the information available to you on the MAVS Website. <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/articles/support-available-for-members-and-volunteers/> Please log in to access all the details and resources, the services are offered free of charge to all members and volunteers of The Society.

**As a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW) you can access support for multiple challenges or concerns.** You can choose between face to face meetings, phone calls or online sessions through the Converge Support portal. All discussions with Converge clinicians are strictly confidential.

### How to access the Converge Support Program

**Call 1300 687 327**, or

Visit the Online Portal (<https://convergeinternational.com.au/portal>) and login with  
*Username = Converge; password = eap*

### Get help or support now. If you are struggling, we encourage you to:

Speak with a trusted colleague, friend or family member.

Speak with your Conference President, they are available to listen to your concerns and provide assistance.

If you do not feel comfortable talking to your supervisor, you can also talk to the Pastoral Support Team or Vinnies Membership Safety Partner, please reach out to your Vinnies Member Engagement Coordinator for contact details.

- Reach out to our Converge Support Program, call 1300 687 327
- Visit your GP and speak openly about what's worrying you.
- Use resources available from professional providers.



# HABERFIELD CONFERENCE



**The Haberfield Conference of SVDP is a small but active and dedicated group striving to carry out the Society's mission. The combined years of Membership and serving God and the community exceeds 200 years!**

The Conference continues to provide emergency assistance and visit clients in their homes. This now includes clients living in Croydon as there is currently no active Conference in that parish. Last Christmas Conference Members distributed hampers, food cards and heat relief packs to clients in Haberfield and Croydon. Each year the Conference has a regular program of supporting the Vinnies Christmas and Winter Appeal. Haberfield Conference also has 2 clothing collections each year which are well supported by St Joan of Arc Parish. A recent collection filled 16 bales in the Vinnies truck from the Auburn Distribution Centre.

Conference President and NSW Board Director Peter Doyle has participated in the CEO Sleepout for the last 4 years. Conference Vice-President Carmel McKeough is a regular volunteer at Burwood Vinnies Support Centre. Amanda Gahan, Principal of St Joan of Arc is also a member of the Conference. Amanda organised a Fill the Van/Fill the Pantry Day last September. Parishioners and the school community were invited to fill the Vinnies Night Patrol Van with non-perishable goods. The van was overflowing with donations which were taken to the Night Patrol Kitchen at Lewisham and the pantry at Burwood Vinnies Support Centre.

Haberfield is rostered one Thursday per month on the Bayside Night Patrol Bus Run. Conference Members, parishioners and school families volunteer to make sandwiches and visit clients at three sites in Eastgardens.

The Conference has built a connection with Mary McKillop Outreach (MMO) which is also located in Haberfield. MMO is another important service of SVDP and provides day programs for approximately 45 participants who have intellectual and physical disabilities.

In 2024 Haberfield Conference and St Joan of Arc Primary School supported an easter egg hunt and barbeque for participants. The Conference also supports the Mary McKillop Giving Tree with a Christmas tree placed in St Joan of Arc Church and Conference Members, parishioners and the school community contributing Christmas presents to MMO participants. Last year's response was very generous and also included gifts for the dedicated staff.

Haberfield Conference hosted the Western Suburbs Region Festival Mass on 8 November 2024, with dinner afterwards in St Joan of Arc School Hall. Danielle Davis was commissioned as the new president of Concord West Conference and Haberfield Conference member Marea Dorman received a certificate for her 25 years of service as a member of the Society. Kevin Nelson Smith (Mortlake Conference) who commenced as a member in October 1979 and Tony Perosh (Concord) who joined the Society in 2005 also received certificates. It was a wonderful night of connecting with Vincentians from other Conferences and reflecting on all the Society does through the work of Members and volunteers to assist people in need and advance social justice outcomes.

## RECONNECT DAY AT BANKSTOWN VSC



Reconnect Day was held on 6 November and was well attended by the community with approximately 100 people visiting the site during the period 10.00am to 2.00pm. Tables were set up outside the Bankstown VSC and boxes were brought out progressively over that time to ensure that everyone was given an equal opportunity to select items at Bankstown VSC were prepared and sorted including food hampers, boxes of toys and children's stationery items, boxes of toiletries blankets, beanies, scarfs, slippers and socks.

The purpose of the Reconnect Day is to respectfully promote and engage our community with the services provided by Bankstown Vinnies Support Centre. Our local community is culturally rich and linguistically diverse. In addition, the Reconnect Day allows for networking across the Bankstown VSC network, with Members, Volunteers, local agencies, Vinnies Support Centre Coordinators from the adjoining areas, and the Metro Schools Engagement Officer.



**Sydney Central Council Members**  
end of year meeting at Auburn

Anna (Rozelle),  
Taylor (Kingsford)  
and Donna Boyd  
had a great day at  
the  
**Yabun Festival  
2025**



*In collaboration with the Liverpool Conference,  
Vinnies participated in the Fairfield and Liverpool  
LGA Expo4Schools.*

Teachers and support staff from across the two areas attended to learn more about the support services available for their students and families. It was a great opportunity to share the wonderful work by the Vinnies Mount Pritchard Support Centre, Conference, Van Services and to identify future participants in the Liverpool School Aid Program.

*We're looking forward to going back in 2025!*



**Member, Chris Davis and  
School Officer, Chris Nolan**  
proudly repping the work of  
Vinnies



# VINNIES YOUTH OUT AND ABOUT



## Metro Youth Meet-up

What an incredible turn out to the Metro Youth meet up event!!

After having a record-breaking number of EOIs from O-week, over 4,700, all new EOIs were invited to come meet their Presidents and executive structure, as well as socialise with likeminded young people, all eager to get their hands 'dirty' and help out in their communities.

A big shout out to our Youth Presidents from Macquarie Uni, ACU, UNSW, UTS, University of Sydney and Notre Dame for all coming together to show the power of youth across Metro Region!

Alysha Wong-O'Connor | Youth Engagement Officer Metro



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

*MEMBERS JOIN US ON THE VINNIES VANS*



We are always looking for van volunteers, whether you or your Conference can commit to once a week, once a month, or even just a few times a year on our standby roster. There are many ways you can get involved! Volunteers can choose to participate in a Vinnies van run. You can also help by preparing and donating snack packs, toiletry packs, sandwiches, and other food items. If you can help out with any of the van activities, please complete the quick [Expression of Interest Form](#) or email us and we will get in touch with you.

### Van Services Roster

Sydney, Bayside, Liverpool, Ryde,  
Cumberland, Brekky Van  
Parramatta: Greater Western Sydney  
Broken Bay: Woy Woy

### Sandwich Making Roster

Sydney | Bayside | Liverpool | Ryde | Greater  
Western Sydney | Woy Woy

### Woy Woy Van & Cumberland Van

Volunteers are needed to assist with the Woy Woy & Cumberland Vans Service on a night roster and sandwich roster.

### Snack Pack/Toiletry Pack Making

School communities can donate items for snack packs and toiletry packs or completed packs to Vinnies Vans.

Donations for Vinnies Van Services can be dropped off by appointment to the Lewisham, Greystanes, Mount Pritchard, West Ryde or Woy Woy bases.

[Expression of Interest Form](#)

**VINNIES VAN enquiries**  
[sydneyvv@vinnies.org.au](mailto:sydneyvv@vinnies.org.au)



# A Modern-Day Loaves and Fishes: Celebrating Marie's Selfless Generosity

In a world where social media often highlights self-promotion and materialism, individuals like Marie remind us of the true meaning of kindness, humility, and generosity. Every week, Marie dedicates her time and effort to collect clothing and special food items, including delicious sourdough loaves donated by South Dowling Street Bakery, to support those in need at the South Coogee Vinnies van stop – Bayside run.



Marie's selfless acts evoke the biblical story of the loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-14), where Jesus feeds a multitude of people with five loaves and two fishes and encourages the large gathering to share. This poignant reminder of compassion and generosity inspires us to reflect on the values we hold dear.

"Whatsoever you do unto the least of these, you do unto me."  
- Matthew 25:40

Marie's humility and willingness to serve others without seeking recognition are qualities that should be revered in our society. Unlike some social media influencers who prioritize fame, wealth, and self-promotion, Marie and individuals like her embody the essence of servant-heartedness.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." - Mahatma Gandhi  
These quotes underscore the profound impact that selfless individuals like Marie have on our communities. By prioritising the needs of others, they demonstrate a deeper understanding of what truly brings happiness and fulfillment.

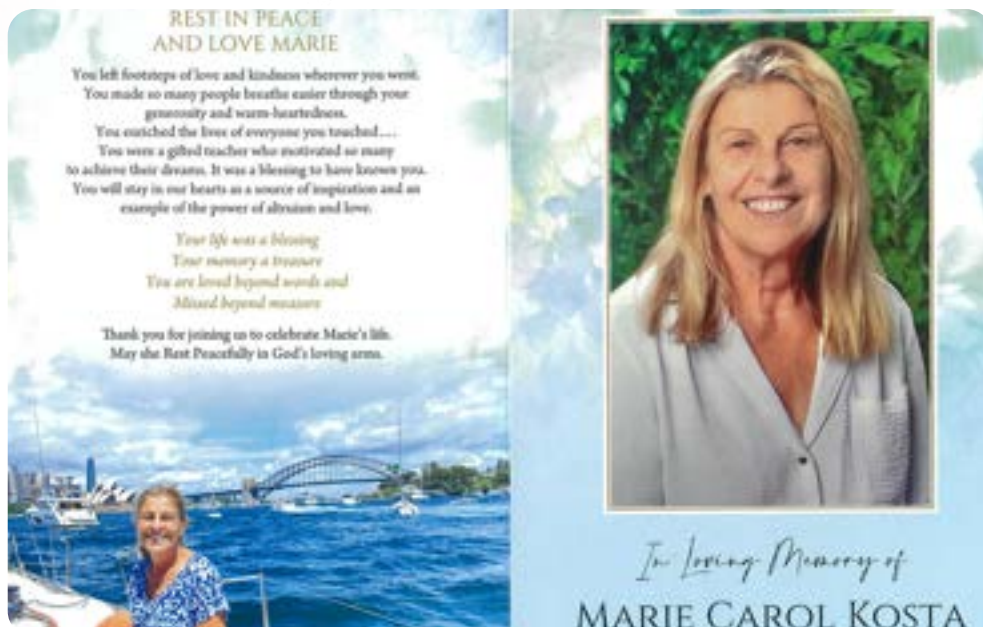
We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Marie and the South Dowling Street Bakery for their tireless efforts to support those in need. Your kindness is a beacon of hope, inspiring us to reevaluate our values and strive for a more compassionate society.

Let us celebrate and emulate individuals like Marie, who remind us that true greatness lies not in seeking fame or wealth but in serving others with humility and generosity. Let us all strive to be more like Marie – to start each day with gratitude and a willingness to serve others. Let us recognize and appreciate the quiet heroes among us, who selflessly make a difference in the lives of others.

Thank you, Marie, for being a shining light in our community. May your kindness and humility inspire us all to become better versions of ourselves.

*Image above: Marie (middle) pictured amongst the vested Vinnies Van volunteers for the Bayside Vinnies van Sunday B Team*

Since, sadly Marie passed away. She will be greatly missed – commemoration below  
Joanne Riakos / Vinnies Van Services and Supply Centre Coordinator





# Vinnies Metro Schools: A Year of Service and Opportunity

The Vinnies Metro Schools Team is marking the start of a **Jubilee Year** filled with opportunities to live the gospel values of love, justice, and compassion. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the schools that supported the 2024 Vinnies Christmas Appeal.

Despite challenges posed by the cost of living, we were overwhelmed by the generosity shown, which brought much-needed support to individuals and families experiencing hardship during the festive season. We hope that our clients and Conferences have also been blessed through the support of school communities.

In 2025, Vinnies invites schools to deepen their engagement in social justice activities and local Conferences. **The Metro Schools Team is happy to meet with local Conferences to discuss how schools can engage with Vinnies' mission throughout the year.** Conferences are encouraged to prepare for the upcoming Winter Appeal and communicate any regional needs to Vinnies Support Centre coordinators.

Additionally, we seek the assistance of Conference Members in answering the important question: "Why should a young person join Vinnies in their local area?" Conference Members are invited to share their insights and experiences with students, helping them understand the profound impact they can have by contributing to their local communities through Vinnies.

We also encourage Conference Members to be prepared to speak in schools during the Winter Appeal (School Sleepouts), sharing stories of local Vinnies works and inspiring students to get involved. By doing so, we hope to motivate young people to take action and join the mission of Vinnies.

The Vinnies Schools Team is excited to host the Mini Vinnies Gathering and Vinnies Secondary Schools Gathering in July at Australian Catholic University, Strathfield. These events offer students from primary and secondary schools the chance to explore Vinnies' work across Sydney, share ideas, and learn how they can contribute to the mission of the Society. Further details and registration information will be available soon, so be sure to keep an eye out for this exciting opportunity.

Additionally, Vinnies offers Social Justice Workshops for schools. These workshops cover important topics such as homelessness, poverty, human dignity, Catholic Social Teaching, migrants and refugees, and environmental stewardship. Schools can book these workshops for an engaging and informative experience that will inspire students to put their faith into action.

## Primary schools

Are encouraged to start a Mini Vinnies group to engage younger students in social justice initiatives, helping them connect their faith with real-world issues through volunteering, advocacy, and fundraising.

## High school students

The Vinnies Service Medallion (VSM) is a great way to deepen their involvement in social justice. The VSM program recognises students who engage in social justice work and provides a valuable platform to demonstrate their commitment, enhancing their employment and university prospects.

We look forward to continuing to work together in 2025 to support students in living their faith and making a positive impact on their communities.

View our Vinnies Metro Schools Team introductory video for 2025: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb9Lr5F7j44](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb9Lr5F7j44).

For more information on these initiatives, contact your Schools Engagement Officer at [metroschools@vinnies.org.au](mailto:metroschools@vinnies.org.au)

# WINTER APPEAL 2025



More and more people are at risk of losing a safe and secure place to call home. With housing stress on the rise, more people across NSW are facing mounting costs and the possibility of living from their car, couch surfing or living in tents for the first time.

Over 122,000 people are currently experiencing homelessness in Australia, including 35,000 people in NSW – the most of any state or territory. There's no one face of homelessness with people of all ages and backgrounds susceptible to going from stability to precarity in a short span of time. Homelessness could affect a neighbour, a colleague, a relative – it's never a choice, but sometimes it's the only option.

With increasing demand, homelessness services across NSW are struggling to meet need. That's why it is critical to prevent homelessness in the first place by providing early intervention supports and assistance. When people in NSW are referred to homelessness services before they lose their housing, they avoid homelessness 82.1% of the time.[1]

This year's Winter Appeal addresses homelessness, highlighting the factors that lead to homelessness and the support needed to recover and rebuild over the long-term. The Society works with people experiencing and at risk of homelessness every day, providing individual assistance with food, clothing, household bills, counselling, housing and early intervention support to prevent hardship from becoming chronic.

Funds raised through the Vinnies Winter Appeal will directly support our core programs, providing vital assistance to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, poverty, and cost-of-living pressures.

The Society thanks our dedicated Members for the important role they play in raising funds for the Winter Appeal so we can continue to meet the rising need of the most vulnerable people in our community.

## **The Winter Appeal will launch on 1 May 2025.**

Materials to support your Winter Appeal efforts, such as posters, donation envelopes and Conference booklets, should be available from 17 April 2025.

1. Productivity Commission (2025) 'Chapter 19: Homelessness Services', Report on Government Services 2025.





## Federal Election 2025 – The call for Social Justice

Thanks to all of our wonderful members, volunteers, staff and friends who joined the Vinnies delegation at the Sydney Alliance pre-election Assembly on Thursday 13 March. Our over 40 strong team were among more than 800 people who gathered together at Westmead. The Assembly was an important show of solidarity, calling for change to policies on housing supply, energy affordability and climate justice in the lead up to the Federal budget and election campaign.

The week before, the Hunter Community Alliance also held an Assembly in Newcastle. Twelve Vincentians joined a 650 strong turnout at that event to listen to life stories, and ask politicians about, stretched services, lack of housing, homelessness and the energy transition that doesn't leave people behind.

At the Sydney Assembly, participants also shared life stories highlighting impacts of the failure of successive governments to provide safe, energy efficient and affordable housing, deal with homelessness, and provide affordable energy. Key asks were put to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Chris Bowen and Dr Andrew Charlton MP, member for Parramatta by community leaders. As Tom Gersbach, Chair of Vinnies NSW Social Justice Committee put to the Assembly, "We know the impact of poverty and cost of living pressures on the people we assist. We want to see more investment in social, affordable and energy-efficient housing."

Subsequent to the Assembly, the Federal budget contains no new commitments on these issues. So, as Australia enters the Federal election campaign, it's time to reach out to Federal MPs and candidates to let them know who we are, what we do, and what our communities need to meaningfully address poverty and housing insecurity in our local areas.



- Listen to our National President about why reducing poverty is so important.
- Urgently sign on to support the Election Statement on Raise the Rate - calling the Federal Government to substantially increase income support payments and reduce poverty.
- Write or seek a meeting with your local Federal MP or candidate - highlight our National Justice and Compassion Federal Election Statement 2025 .
- Contact us at [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au) for more resources.



## GREATER SYDNEY VINNIES COMMUNITY SLEEPOUT 2025

*There are many ways you can support the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout!*

We are thrilled that all three Sydney Metropolitan Vinnies Central Councils will once again unite to hold this year's Greater Sydney Community Sleepout. **We are aiming to raise \$75,000** to fund programs and services across all three Central Councils to support people experiencing a range of challenging circumstances. Funds raised through this event will go directly to our Conferences and Support Centres to offer support to people experiencing disadvantage in our local communities.

We encourage our Vinnies Members from Broken Bay, Sydney and Greater Western Sydney Central Councils to join us and consider participating in this event. Together we can make a difference!

### HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

#### SLEEPOUT & FUNDRAISE

**We invite you to join us and sleep out to be held on Friday 29 August.** It will not only help to raise much-needed funds but also to experience just a taste of what it is like to sleep rough and have to make tough decisions to get by. Register to participate in the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout via our [website](#). Our website contains a full range of event resources to put in your toolkit to help with your fundraising efforts.

#### VOLUNTEERS & SUPPORTERS

Help out with event volunteering for various duties and/or supporter opportunities in the lead-up to and at the event. Please keep an eye out for a call to volunteer closer to the event date.

#### PROMOTE THE EVENT

To ensure we reach this year's fundraising goal, can you help us spread our reach? Share the [event link](#) among your local communities, parishes etc. We will have a 2025 event poster to share with you soon.

#### DONATE

Can't participate in the event? You may still give your support to help us reach our fundraising goal. Head over to the [Greater Sydney Community Sleepout 2025](#) fundraising page to donate.

For further information, visit the Greater Sydney Vinnies Community Sleepout Webpage or contact Kate Conroy the event coordinator at [kate.conroy@vinnies.org.au](mailto:kate.conroy@vinnies.org.au).



### Dear Members of St Vincent de Paul NSW,

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to the Society. Your time and service are invaluable in carrying out our mission to support those in need.

You will have recently received an invitation to attend a session about the new Member and Volunteer System (MAVS).

This system has been designed to make it easier for you to stay connected, access important information, and update your details as needed.

MAVS will also provide essential guidance on the mandatory learning courses that all Society members are required to complete. The courses ensure we can continue our work safely and effectively protecting not only ourselves but also the many people we assist.

### The courses cover:

#### **Safeguarding, Code of Conduct, Privacy, Workplace Health & Safety**

I strongly encourage you to take the time to attend the session closest to you. This is not only an opportunity to learn but also to connect socially with fellow members. Morning tea or lunch will be provided, and our staff will be available to assist you with navigating MAVS and completing the required training.

Kind regards

Peter Houweling

NSW State President- The Society of St Vincent de Paul

## TRAINING SESSIONS TO BE HELD

- 10 APRIL** Woolloomooloo Ozanam Learning Centre: 99 Forbes St, Woolloomooloo
- 5 MAY** Redfern Vinnies Support Centre: 317 Cleveland St, Redfern
- 7 MAY** Penrith Vinnies Support Centre: 7/308 High Street, Penrith
- 12 MAY** Wyong Vinnies Support Centre: 47 Howarth Street, Wyong
- 13 MAY** Gosford Vinnies Support Centre: 273-275 Mann Street, Gosford
- 14 MAY** Hornsby Vinnies Support Centre: 41 Jersey Street, Hornsby



### Message from the Metro team

*Metro Members are welcome and encouraged to attend any of these training sessions.* In addition, each month, your Metro team Coordinator will continue to email a compliance report. This report will include: The expiry dates for each Member's

#### **Police Check, Working With Children's Check (WWCC) and Safeguarding (Child Safe)**

If any of these are not completed or up to date, it may result in the Member being marked as 'Inactive', meaning they will be unable to attend meetings, visitations or other Member activities.

### Please reach out to the team if you have any questions.

*The Member Community and Engagement Team*

Broken Bay: John Ferguson, Greater Western Sydney: Earnest Henry, Sydney: Paul Longobardi

✉ [MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au](mailto:MetroMembers@vinnies.org.au)

For further information and to **REGISTER for a session go to the MAVs website**  
<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/events/>





## Has your Conference placed an order for the Vinnies Gift Cards?

*Gift cards come in denominations of \$100, \$50, and \$30, and can be purchased in packs of 50 by Conferences.*

**From April 14, 2025**, all retail purchases at Vinnies Retail Shops must be completed with Vinnies Gift Cards. If your Conference/VSC has not yet placed an order or has not yet activated the cards they have received, we encourage you to do so. Please also ensure that all family assistance vouchers (pink forms) are removed from circulation for Vinnies retail shop purchases except for emergency circumstances.

### *Everything you need to know*

#### **GIFTCARD RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON THE MAVs WEBSITE.**

Retail Guide to Assist in Determining Appropriate Gift Card Value

Supply Centre Order Form

Gift Card Process Flow Chart

Conference/Hub Reference Sheet

**You must be logged in firstly** on the [MAVs website](#) with your Vinnies email to view the above resources in the [Member Area](#) on the website.

For placing Vinnies Gift Cards order and activation, please email the Supply Centre at [supplycentre@vinnies.org.au](mailto:supplycentre@vinnies.org.au)

For other queries regarding the Vinnies Gift Cards, contact Ridwana Orchi [member.programs@vinnies.org.au](mailto:member.programs@vinnies.org.au)

## LOG IN TO THE MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER HUB TO VIEW MEMBER RESOURCES



Once you've logged in click on the link to view the [Vinnies Giftcard Resources](https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/resources/providing-assistance/gift-cards/)  
<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/resources/providing-assistance/gift-cards/>

## Is your Conference looking for a new Special Work?

### **Introducing the Vincentian Pastoral Care Program to pilot in Sydney**

*We need at least 2 Conferences to support this special work to put forward 1-2 Members who will be available during day times to offer a unique caring opportunity.*

Our Pastoral Care Program is looking to be established at Woolloomooloo at the Ozanam Learning Centre and the Matthew Talbot Hostel. Extending our Membership's care to those who receive support from our Vinnies Services. Members involved with the Vincentian Pastoral Care Program will be engaged as volunteers at these services with Vincentian badges indicating you are part of Pastoral Care and are available to give companionship, compassion and a listening ear.

A welcome session will be made available, and ongoing support and training available to support all Members who are interested.

Frederic Ozanam had a desire to **embrace the world in a network of charity...** and said within this network that "Yours must be a work of love, of kindness, you must give your time, your talents, yourselves"

We are inspired by our Founders words to add this pastoral approach to our services.

**Conference Presidents:** If you would like the Mission & Formation team to come to one of your meetings to give more details, please contact us.

**All Members:** if you are interested in committing to this, please also contact us at [Mission@vinnies.org.au](mailto:Mission@vinnies.org.au)



*We look forward to hearing from you soon.*

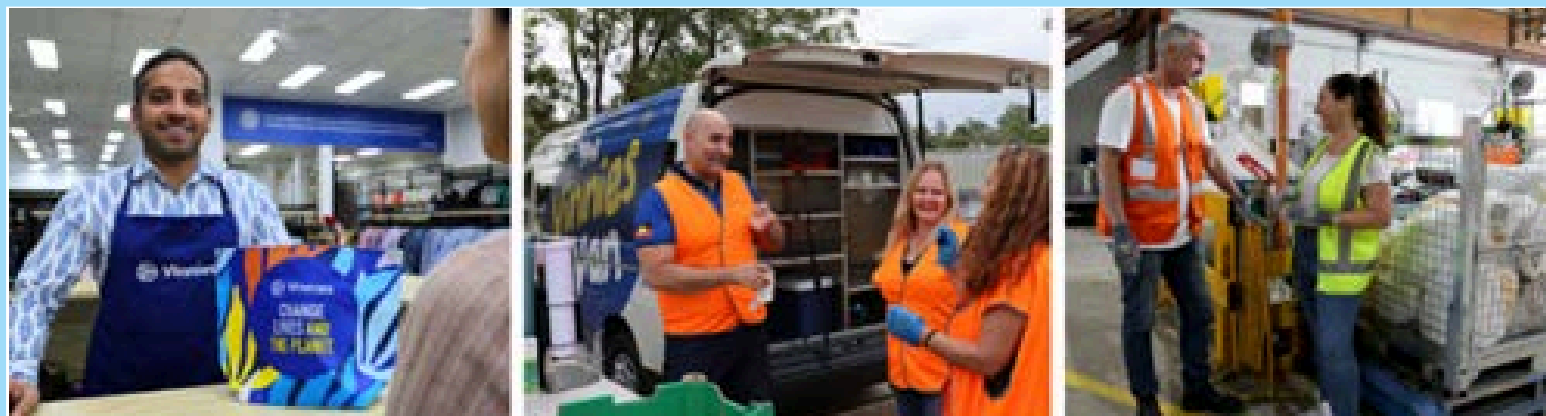


## Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

### **1800 4 SUPPORT – option 1**

Members in Metro region provided over 100 notifications of concern to Safeguarding in 2024.

If you have concerns about the safety or wellbeing of children, young people or vulnerable adults, please notify Vinnies Safeguarding Team for additional supports.



# Safety Matters

## Your Safety Matters: Updates and resources

At the heart of our mission is a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our Members and volunteers. We recognise that your dedication and hard work are essential to the services we provide, and that your safety is paramount. We are committed to creating a safe, supportive and respectful workplace where everyone can thrive. Please familiarise yourself with the safety updates and resources below.

## Safe Home Visitation and Outreach Policy

We are committed to delivering high-quality services and support in peoples' homes and community settings. Our updated Safe Home Visitation and Outreach Policy reflects current practice and ensures the safety of our Members, volunteers, employees and the people we assist. It provides clear guidelines and procedures for conducting safe and responsible home visits and outreach activities. Where relevant, please discuss the content and its application with your Conference President.

Find the [policy here](#).

## Work-related Violence Policy

We've introduced a new Work-Related Violence Policy to prevent and minimise the risk and impact of work-related aggression and violence when it does occur. The primary objective of the policy is to ensure the safety of our people, while acknowledging that our work with the people we assist must be trauma informed, and person centred.

[Access the policy here](#)

## Support available for Members and Volunteers

*We understand that sometimes challenging situations can arise. That's why we're highlighting the availability of our Converge Support Program. Converge offers confidential support services to all our Members and volunteers. We encourage you to explore the information available to you on the [MAVS Website](#). Log in and find out more.*

## Safety Induction Module

Completing the Safety Induction Module on the MV Portal is a legislative requirement for all Members and volunteers. This module provides essential information about workplace safety, risk management, and emergency procedures at Vinnies. If you haven't already completed the module, please take the time to do so as soon as possible via the [MV Portal](#).

## Safety and Emergency Resources

We've been working to improve the safety and emergency resources on the MAVS website. The website now contains a dedicated section for all things safety and emergency.

Please take the time to explore these resources. Scan the QR code or [click this link](#) to log in to the website now. Contact your Conference President or Volunteer Manager with any questions or safety concerns.

*Together, we can create a safe and respectful workplace for all.*





**Dear Fellow Twinning Officers,**

The latest news regarding Twinning issues.

## **1. Extra Easter grants sent to our overseas twins**

I am pleased to report that several Conferences in Sydney Arch have been very generous by providing extra Easter grants to their overseas twins. These grants were sent off in early February. Nine Conferences and our Central Council have contributed \$5,100 for Easter grants, which were sent to 27 overseas twins in 7 countries (Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand), all of which will gratefully appreciate these timely donations.

If you wish, your Conference can still send a late Easter donation to your twin(s) in the next Quarterly payment run on 7th April 2025. I will remind you in a future Twinning Update.

## **2. Sydney Arch Central Council has a new Twin**

We have some good news regarding our Central Council's submission to twin with the Northern Region Council of Fiji (OSRN 17245)! This was approved earlier this year, and we were able to provide our financial support in the first quarterly payment run, which has been delayed until later in February.

To put this in perspective, Sydney Arch CC supports 194 overseas twins in 8 countries (Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Thailand). Our Central Council supports 5 twins: 4 standard twins in India and this new Council-to-council twin in Fiji. We have supported the four Indian twins since 1st July 2002 to the tune of \$80 per quarter per twin. I will give you more background to the 4 Indian twins in the next update. The support for a council-to-council twin is higher at \$200 per quarter. Let me give you some background about our new twin.

Fiji is an island group of more than 300 islands. It's famed for rugged landscapes, palm-lined beaches and coral reefs with clear lagoons. Most of the people live on the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. The capital is Suva (on Viti Levu). The Northern Regional Council is based in Vanua Levu and in some neighbouring small islands. It consists of 8 Conferences, some of them with poor connectivity, as the terrain is quite rugged. In their current structure, the 8 Conference Presidents are Northern Regional Council Vice Presidents. The Northern Regional Council is based at Labasa and works closely with the Holy Family Labasa Conference Members.

The President of the Northern Regional Council is Semesa Vilise, who is very active Vincentian and is very keen to improve the lives of the people they assist. In fact, Semesa Vilise was President of the Holy Family Conference, before he was elected as Regional Council President. He is still a member of the Holy Family Conference. In Labasa, they have a two-storey building (see below), which they intend to rent out to secure a steady income for the region.



This building in Labasa has two shops on the ground floor and a 3-bedroom unit on the top. This was badly managed by the National Council and was trashed. The Northern Regional Council will now look after it. They have spent 4000 FD to restore it so far.



Semesa Vilise, while President of Holy Family Conference, has arranged to pay for a 99- year lease on the land, which is shown below, behind Semesa and Samuel (Semesa is the taller man on the left and Samuel is President of an neighbouring Conference in the Region). Their aim is to resettle squatters here, where they can have a better house and a quarter-acre to grow crops.

### **3. Metro Twinning Information Workshop**

Last year we had a successful Twinning Information Workshop on Friday, 8th March 2024. We had 12 attending: 5 Members from Sydney Arch, 5 from Broken Bay, one from GWS and one from Wilcannia Forbes region plus the 3 presenters.

I am pleased to report that another Twinning Information Workshop, which covers all the key aspects of Twinning, will be held again this year, on

**Friday 11th July 2025 at Lewisham.**

Please mark this important day in your diaries. All the details for those who intend to participate in this workshop will be provided in the next Twinning Update.

Frances Scurfield (NSW Twinning Chairperson) has kindly agreed to lead the workshop. In addition, Bruno Spedalieri (NSW Twinning Projects Officer) will speak about the categories of projects, the submission process, and the required conditions. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about the various aspects of Twinning, particularly for new Twinning Officers. Morning tea is provided on arrival and a light lunch at the end of the 3-hour workshop session!

### **4. Away for a month**

I would like to advise that my wife and I are off on a cruise and tour overseas from 19th February to 20th March. This means I may have problems receiving and responding to emails. I will catch up with unanswered emails as soon as I return.

### **5. Any Updates on Twinning Contacts?**

There have been several changes in Twinning contacts, which I have updated in our national database. If you are no longer the Twinning contact for your Conference, would you please let me know the contact details of the new person? The lack of correct twinning contact details is often cited as the key reason for poor communication with our overseas twins.

**Kind regards, Gil Vella**