



BROKEN BAY MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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For advice and information
contact Vinnies Safeguarding
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Irene Margaret, Teresa Ng, Jo Karaolis, Bruce Heilbuth & John Ferguson of Chatswood & Forestville Conferences

Dear Members, Volunteers, and Staff,

As we celebrate the Easter season in this Jubilee Year of Hope, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for the heart and dedication you bring to our mission in Broken Bay.



The Jubilee reminds us of God's enduring faithfulness and invites us to be instruments of hope, healing, and renewal in the lives of others. In so many quiet and powerful ways, that's exactly what you do. Offering your time, your gifts, and your compassion to serve those most in need.

Whether through a kind word, a warm meal, or simply your presence, your actions reflect the spirit of Easter and the call to walk with others in love and solidarity. You are living out the values we hold dear, and for that, I am truly grateful.

May the hope of the Risen Christ and the grace of this Jubilee year continue to renew your heart and inspire your service.

With heartfelt thanks,

Michelle Chahine

Broken Bay Central Council President

Message from the acting Regional Director, Louis Hearnden



It has been a privilege to step into the role of Acting Regional Director since February, while Ashvini Ambihaipahar 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.

Our Metro Schools Team has launched the year with a clear call to service, inviting schools to deepen their connection with the Society's mission. From supporting the 2024 Vinnies Christmas Appeal to preparing for upcoming Winter Appeal activities, they are aiming to create strong partnerships between schools and Conferences. This collaboration is vital not only for delivering material support to people in need, but also for nurturing the next generation of Vincentians.

I'd like to thank Conference members who are helping to answer the question: Why should a young person join Vinnies? Your stories and example are inspiring students to become part of something bigger than themselves.

We also acknowledge the ongoing work to ensure our mission is delivered safely. Updated safety policies including our Safe Home Visitation and Work-Related Violence policies are now available on MAVS. Please take the time to read these important documents and complete the Safety Induction Module on the MV Portal if you haven't already.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the late Marie Kosta, a dedicated volunteer whose humble acts of service at the South Coogee Vinnies Van brought comfort and dignity to many. I also want to acknowledge the late Paul Schneider, a life member of St Rose of Lima Conference. Their stories serve as a reminder of the profound impact that quiet, consistent generosity can have in our communities. May they rest in peace.

Thank you for all you do to bring hope and compassion to the people we serve.

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.





Lifetime Achievement Award

Robert (Bob) Badger



The Workshop according to Bob



Thirty years ago I visited the St Joseph's Workshop in Jusfruit Drive, West Gosford. I was interested in helping people less fortunate than myself. I spoke with the manager who, at the time, was Charlie Mc (now passed). When I informed him that I was a builder, he scooped me straight up. The next thing I knew, I was filling out paperwork at the Gosford office so I could start work.

I stayed there for 18 months working five days a week, after which I returned to the building industry for the next six years. Upon my retirement, I returned to the Workshop to continue the valuable work for the community. Some of the people I have enjoyed working with were: Charlie Mc, Doc M, Ray R, Tom J, Bill, Doug, Ken W, B Mc, John F, Bruce D, John B (Scotty). Last name withheld as some members are no longer with us.

The Workshop not only assisted the community but also the Members who were somewhat lost after retirement and had a lot of time on their hands. A decision was made in 2010 to relocate the Workshop to its current location of 2/18 Dignity Crescent, West Gosford.

We started repairing pews for the Holy Cross church at Kincumber (Built 1842) and continued to repair furniture placed out on the curbside for reuse by the less fortunate. Scotty, Kim and I redesigned the chest of drawers units that were easier to make, and that design is still used today. Another side of the Workshop was the social days out that were organised by Barney R and Mike E. These days would include trips to the Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour, where Barney was a volunteer. His knowledge of the vessels and the stories that he told were both fascinating and informative.

Currently, we enjoy a monthly luncheon locally at East Gosford, where the volunteers from any day of the week can get together and talk to others who do not attend on their day for a social catch-up. *In photo L to R Wayne Gibb Workshop Manager, Bob Badger (Centre), Kevin O'Donnell Workshop Supervisor.*

St Joseph's Workshop

WHERE MANY HANDS MAKE GOOD WORKS

St Joseph's Workshop crafts high quality, handcrafted furniture including toy boxes for the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in the Central Coast community - families escaping domestic violence, victims of disaster or people who have fallen on hard times and are struggling to make ends meet.

For more details or to place an order [download our brochure](#).
Contact stjosephworkshop@vinnies.org.au or call 0424 959 142



CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2024



Christmas Appeal – a job well done

I would like to say a BIG THANKYOU to all the members of the Northern Beaches conferences and the staff in our Vinnies Support Centre for their hard work organising and delivering over 700 hampers across our region. It was a fantastic effort to reach out to so many people.

I would also like to thank all our parish schools and catholic high schools for their fantastic support as well.

Thanks to One Meal, Blackmores and the Mounties group for their continued support over many years.

This is a letter Lyn McNeil (Balgowlah president) and member Gai Hamer received from a family: (on right side)

Dear Gai,
Just wanted to express my gratitude again for the wonderful Christmas hamper delivered right to our door. You and your husband's kindness and caring meant so much to me and my family and also did St Cecelia's support. We have used many items in the hamper and are still doing so. We are very grateful as things that happened in our family have been and are still overwhelming emotionally, physically, mentally and financially making life seem only hardship.

*You give us hope again.
God Bless and love and peace.*

This is why we do what we do in Vinnies,
Mick O'Farrell – Regional President, Northern Beaches



Lower North Shore Volunteer Expo

Members Irene Margaret, Teresa Ng, Jo Karaolis, Bruce Heilbuth and John Ferguson of Chatswood and Forestville Conferences got together on the 27th March to promote the good works of Vinnies members and volunteers in the area.

We joined many other charities and social services at this Lower North Shore Volunteer Expo – kindly hosted by the Willoughby City Council in the Dougherty Community Centre.

It was a great event, with quite a number of people coming to us asking for information about membership with Vinnies, and a couple of people asking about volunteering for the Vinnies shops. It was also wonderful to meet with our colleagues in other organisations that serve the local community



Christmas across Broken Bay

Christmas hampers run in Manly Vale

Joanne, Valerie and Clara Donato helping families with directions and runs for hampers. The Marabito family with Julio and Ryan Joris loading up the trolleys.

Our Christmas Hampers and appeal are a time of great joy within our community. Julio Donato heads up our Manly Vale Conference hamper appeal with his family and coordinates support from our St Kieran's Church community, St Kieran's School and P&F Association, St Augustine's School community, Blackmores and Rotary. We all come together to create hampers, donate goods and deliver to those in need in our community. Families are eager to volunteer to take the hampers to those in need, and the recipients are most appreciative of the gift and grateful to receive the hand up at Christmas.

This year we delivered 84 hampers, and we are thankful to all our volunteers for continuing this Christmas tradition at St Kieran's and sharing the Christmas spirit. Since Christmas, we have received many cards and words of thanks. One recipient said, "You don't know what it means to know that the community cares enough to do this for us. It has made such a difference to us and has restored my faith in human nature. Thank you so much."

Thank you to the families that volunteered, the Donato family, Ryan for trolleying hampers to cars, and all our supporters; every little thing makes a big difference.

Thank you!

Lea Joris, President, Manly Vale St Kieran's Conference





Coolah – The Home of the Black Stump

It would not seem like Christmas without our annual Hamper/Toy delivery to our twinned Vinnies country Conference, Coolah. "Why Coolah and where is it?" you may be asking. About 20 years ago, New South Wales was in the grip of a crippling drought and country people were finding it hard to make ends meet.

Some city Conferences were twinned with country Conferences to provide them with the support they may need. Davidson Conference was twinned with Coolah Conference and so began a wonderful friendship with the amazing help of our local St Martin's primary school. The lovely small town of Coolah (known as the town of the Black Stump and there really is a black stump!!!) is situated in the central west part of NSW 400 kms N.W of Sydney. Surrounded by paddocks of grain, cattle and sheep, the township has suffered times of drought, floods, fires and storms in the short time we have been visiting.

Each year at Christmas the St Martin de Porres Primary school community in Davidson have generously donated hamper items and toys to the families from Coolah and the surrounding areas who could do with a hand up. The size and quality of the hamper baskets and toys from such a small school is amazing and every year they seem to get bigger. Thanks to Dom (one of our Parishioners) and his trailer, a dad from the school, plus Tony and I we are able to transport the Christmas cheer of generous gifts to Coolah. We do 800kms return in one day. We love the trip and we all agree it is the journey and not just the destination that is important. The journey starts with our phone call to Peter Manning (President of Coolah Conference) in late October. The list of families goes to the school where the generous teachers, parents and children prepare the hamper baskets and bags of toys. These are presented to Davidson Conference at an Advent Hamper Liturgy in Church. The night before the trip the trailer and cars are packed for an early start the next morning.

This year we had the added enjoyable company of one of the school dads who kept Dom company. Along the way we stop for coffee, then morning tea at Denman before our final stop in Coolah where we unpack the hampers and enjoy a lovely lunch at the welcoming home of Peter and Judy Manning. We do love to see them and the beautiful views over the township from their farm. 800kms in one day is a long trip – but we wouldn't miss this Christmas tradition and look forward to our trip each year. We are so grateful to the St Martin's School community, teachers, parents and children for their generosity and support over so many years. Thank you one and all.

Tony & Carmel Smith and Davidson St Vincent de Paul Conference members.

Photo above: Coolah L-R - Dom Bragge, Judy Manning, Peter Manning and Gengis Yaglipinar



Our Christmas Party at Community Housing

On Tuesday 17th December 2024, the hottest day last summer, our Vinnies team joined with the Vinnies Van and St George Housing staff to provide an unforgettable Christmas party for residents of the Community Housing estate in Artarmon. It was too hot to hold a BBQ, instead the Vinnies Van and Joanne Riakos brought delicious barbecued chicken and provided it to all the residents who attended, together with salads and cakes provided by our volunteers.

Afterwards, Joanne and the Van turned on tea and coffee and cold drinks, as well as giving out snack packs and lollies for the children. At the end of the party, each of the 60 people who came received a Christmas hamper, and their children were given toys that were kindly donated by students at Mercy College. It was a most heart-warming experience to be with the residents, to see the way they cared for each other and joined in the spirit of the day. And their appreciation of our efforts, with tears and hugs and exclamations of "God Bless You", was very moving.

We came away with many stories but just one will sum up the experience for us all. This was a gentleman who when we rang to invite him to the party replied very brusquely that he didn't want a hamper and that 'it was too little too late'. We discovered later that this man suffers from severe depression and that his partner is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. They find it difficult to get out of their unit, are socially isolated and living a nightmare. Against all odds, he came to the party. He couldn't stay long, but long enough to have a drink and a heartfelt conversation. He smiled, we shook hands and he thanked us for the hamper and a gift for him and his partner. He wished us a Merry Christmas.



Respected elders of the
Community Housing estate

Jo Karaolis, Member, Chatswood Our Lady of Dolours Conference

(Above: Some of the residents pose for a group photo)



Ocean Rock Pool Charity Swim revisited!

On January 18th 2025, the fourth Ocean Rock Pool Charity swim was to be held on the Northern beaches.

Louise, our daughter, and her sons have been great supporters over the years of the Ocean Rock Pool swim and have raised thousands for mental health on the Northern Beaches. Northern Beaches Regional President Mick O'Farrell and his wife Trish joined us in raising funds for this worthy cause. On a sunny day, there are 14 beautiful rock pools from Palm Beach to Manly, but the weather on January 18th did not do them justice. The days before the scheduled swim, Sydney was absolutely drenched with heavy rain, pounding surf and strong winds. Small balls of a mystery substance were along most shorelines so the beaches and pools were closed because of the threat of pollution and dangerous surf conditions.

The organiser, Michael Harrold and his team, decided swimming was not an option that day but that all registered swimmers and runners would visit each rock pool as a support to the charities (Vinnies, Lifeline, Gotcha4life and Hammond Care) and sponsors. We started off in rain, but when arriving at Palm Beach, the conditions for a swim had improved. When we arrived at Mona Vale, however, heavy rain and fog hid the beach and pool. Some pools were very dangerous with heavy surf conditions, whilst others were okay. When we arrived at Fairy Bower Pool at Manly, conditions were quite good. However, a celebrity 50m kickboard swim organised at South Curl Curl beach had to be cancelled because of the dangerous conditions. This was reorganised for Saturday, February 1st.

Saturday Feb 1 looked like being another cloudy and wet day, but conditions improved so by the afternoon, it was a perfect day for the celebrity kickboard race.

Our daughter Louise was asked to represent Vinnies in the swim. Louise was joined by celebrities Sophie Scamps, our local Mackellar Federal Member, Sue Heins, our local Warringah Council Mayor, Guy Leech, a former Australian ironman surf lifesaving champion and a representative from Lifeline.

It was a fun afternoon in lovely weather and good company. We were very happy to wear our Vinnies hats and support our wonderful SVdP society.

Can't wait till next year. We had better start our swimming training now!
Into the pool we go!

Tony & Carmel Smith and Davidson St Vincent de Paul Conference members.
(pictured aboved)



Vinnies Hornsby Fashion Parade

We held the inaugural Vinnies Fashion Parade

hosted by Hornsby TAFE – on Friday 7th March.

The event has raised funds for children in the Hornsby region who need school supplies to help them get to school and have a decent education.

The parade included a performance by TAFE students in multicultural dress and then by our Vinnies representatives modelling fashion from our stores, which were later auctioned with some great results. Thank you to our wonderful models. Funds were also raised by way of donation and raffles with some great prizes.

Local Federal member Julian Leaser attended the event and spoke of the importance of the work of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in assisting individuals and families during times of crisis and great hardship.

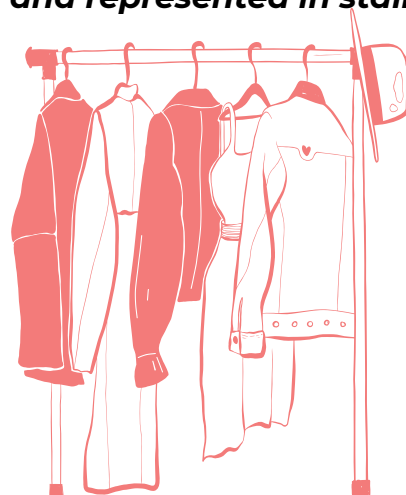
Here is our Vision

We want children to be proud and walk tall when they go to school. And if they are dressed in the correct clothes, shoes and uniforms, they will feel much more like going to school. Last year, I was speaking to one of the families we support in the community. I was told by the parent that she often prayed it would not rain. When I asked why, she said her children had holes in their shoes and wore cardboard linings in their shoes to stop wearing holes in their socks. When it did rain, she would go to the supermarket to ask for a cardboard box to cut up to put in their shoes.

Having to line shoes with cardboard is more like a story from the Great Depression. To think that in this day and age, a child would have to be worried about the shoes they wear to school rather than to enjoy their education and get ahead in life. So that's how the fashion parade came to be. We want to assist children with some of the basic things that ensure they can get to school with all they need.

Thank you to the organisations sponsoring the event and represented in stalls on the day:

- TAFE NSW,
- NSW Police Force
- Services Australia
- Mission Australia
- Northcott Hornsby
- Lifeline
- Relationships Australia
- Community Migrant Resource Centre
- Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre
- Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Community College



Thanks also to Vinnies Members and Staff who made the day such a wonderful success!

Shirley Kelynack, Hornsby Regional President

Gosford & Woy Woy Member Support Day

The Hand that Offers the Cup



Over 20 Conference Members gathered at the Gosford Support Centre on Wednesday 26 February for a Gosford & Woy Woy Member Support Day. The members came together to celebrate their good works and to share their vision and hope for the future. It was a great opportunity to hear from presenters from different parts of the organisation about the range of supports available as well as the latest developments in programs and services.

Regional President Annette Johnstone welcomed Members, acknowledged the Traditional Custodians and introduced the range of speakers. Corinne Lindsell, gave a very moving spiritual reflection related to the Vinnies logo and values – “The Hand that Offers the Cup.” She reflected on how our work is so important in fulfilling the mission of our founders to accompany and support the most vulnerable members of our community. In them, we encounter the person of Christ.

John Ferguson spoke on the range of supports available to Conferences in the areas of fundraising, events and the recruitment of new members. Kate Conroy and Janice Stokes spoke on matters relating to the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding respectively. Bridget Dunn gave a presentation of the new MAVS online system and demonstrated how to set up an account and access compulsory and voluntary training and learning modules. Ketaki Wasnikar spoke of development and opportunities for Members and Conferences in the Schools and Youth space. Denis O'Rourke spoke on the importance of social justice and advocacy as an integral aspect of the good works of members.

Thank you to Lisa Dalton, Nikki Willmette, Krystal Lyle and Deborah Dmoch for assisting in the organisation of this event.

John Ferguson, Member & Community Engagement Coordinator



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.



EULOGY



Paul Schneider 1943-2025 – The Quiet Achiever

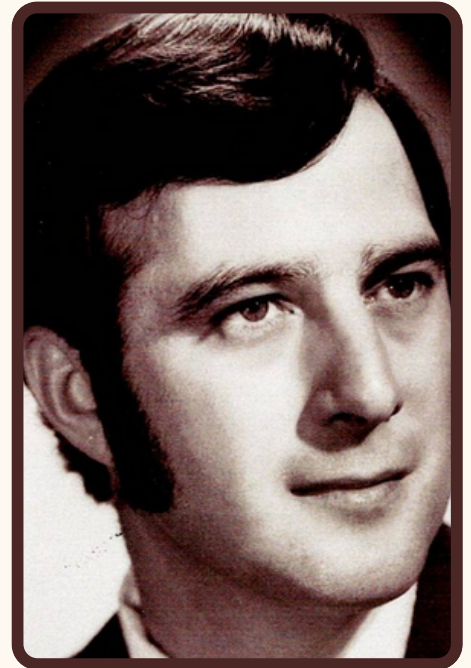
Life Member St Vincent de Paul Society St Rose of Lima Conference

Paul was a country boy born in Taree in 1943 and raised on the family's dairy farm. His schooling was typical country; primary at St Joseph's Krambach then to St Joseph's Boy's Boarding School and secondary education boarding at St John's College Woodlawn. He was a top Rugby League and handball player.

He starred as Yum Yum in the school production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. He achieved honours in 5 grades of piano forte and played the tenor horn. This was the start of a dazzling life in music.

He moved to Strathfield, staying with relatives, and trained in Sydney to be a telecommunication technician. He later moved to "God's Country", Sydney's Northern Beaches, to live with relatives.

This quiet unpretentious gentleman mastered the piano, steel guitar, tenor horn, tenor and alto saxophone, clarinet and even harmonica and tambourine.



He studied at the Conservatorium for years but was also self-taught. Things started to jump and Paul performed with two bands *The Sundowners* and *The Renegades*. They played the Pub and Club circuit all over the State. They got a bigger reception at East's Leagues Club than Kamal, and the next time he performed with them he was supporting them!! They were also booked to appear on a TV Christmas Carol Show but the previous entertainer over-shot his time causing their act to be passed over, causing great disappointment to Paul and his mates.

As his daughter regaled me with his life as a muso, I was blown away. No matter where he was entertaining, once he got into the swing, he could have been playing at Carnegie Hall or the local pub he was in his own element, doing his own thing and loving it! I knew Paul for decades, and he casually once said was he used to play in a band when he was younger. I had no idea I was in the company of a multi-talented entertainer, singer and musician.

Paul was made a Life Member of the Society for his diligent service, especially as our long serving Treasurer. He was a loving husband and father and very proud of his family. He had a manner that made everybody feel comfortable and was cherished by all who were lucky enough to know him. His popularity was more than evident when so many of his old work mates turned up at his funeral.

Paul was the ideal Vincentian – kind, devout, giving and caring and very humble. In my life I have met hundreds of people from all social and professional genres, high and low, but Paul was one of a kind. He went through life putting people at ease with his natural friendly and caring manner. Without the Paul Schneiders of the world it would be a darker place.

His country, his district, and parish all benefitted, as he quietly went about his business – a genuine Christian man, intent on pleasing God and those he passed on his walk through life, unknowingly gracing others with his presence. We will not see his like again.

Rex Harding OAM

President St Rose of Lima Conference, Collaroy Plateau

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.

Frédéric 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

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.

NSW State President, The Society of St Vincent de Paul

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

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

**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

For other queries regarding the Vinnies Gift Cards, contact Ridwana Orchi 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/>



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 for more resources.

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

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.



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.

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.

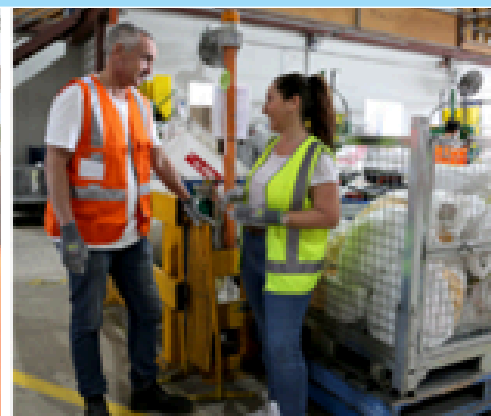
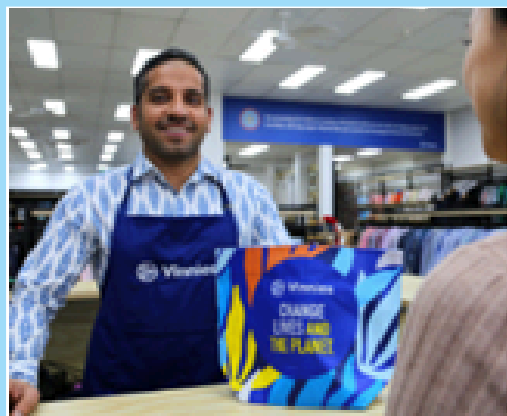
High school students

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.

For more information on these initiatives, contact your Schools Engagement Officer at metroschools@vinnies.org.au



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 people's 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.



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

