



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

BROKEN BAY DIOCESE

November 2024
edition #2

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NEWSLETTER

Broken Bay Central Council
President - Michelle Chahine



Dear Members, Volunteers and Staff,

As we approach Christmas, we at Vinnies wish you, your family, and our entire community a joyful, safe, and peaceful season.

This year has brought both challenges and resilience, and we have faced each obstacle together with unity and compassion. Through it all, the spirit of Christmas shines brightly in the unwavering dedication of our members, staff, and volunteers, whose kindness and faithfulness uplift those most in need.

Christmas is a time for gratitude, reflection, and kindness, and we are blessed to witness these values in the heart of our Vinnies family. Your contributions make a profound difference in the lives of others, and we are incredibly grateful for your compassion and commitment.

As we celebrate the achievements of 2024 and enter this sacred season, we are reminded of the true meaning of Christmas: the joyous Birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. May His light fill our hearts and inspire us to carry forward His message of hope, compassion, and peace.

Merry Christmas, and may the New Year bring you health, happiness, and abundant grace.

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Metro Regional Director - Ash Ambihaipahar



As we approach the Christmas season, one of our busiest times of the year, the Christmas Appeal is in full swing. Local parishes, schools, and other community initiatives are coming together to support those in need, showcasing the generosity and compassion of our community.

A special congratulations to our Members, Volunteers, Vinnies Services, Retail, Vans, and Metro Staff for the success of the Metro Vinnies Community Sleepout at Western Sydney University, Parramatta. The event raised over \$81,000, with each of the three Central Councils receiving approximately \$27,000 to support those in need. Special thanks to Kate Conroy, Metro Manager for Member and Youth Engagement, and Deborah Dmoch, Metro Operations Support Officer, for their dedication in making this event a success. With 140 registered attendees and 80 participants spending the night in solidarity, it was a powerful reminder of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness.

The McKell Institute's new report, Immediate Aid, Measurable Impact: Examining the Effectiveness of Emergency Relief, highlights the significant impact of the Society's work in NSW. The report, based on a survey of 900 clients, reveals that 80.4% of clients had a positive experience with emergency relief, and 78.1% credited Vinnies with helping them achieve stability. The report, launched at our Hurstville Vinnies Support Centre, emphasises the vital role we play in preventing crises such as eviction and hunger. We were honoured to have Federal Minister Amanda Rishworth MP and Linda Burney MP join us for this important event.

We've also introduced Vinnies Gift Cards, replacing traditional assistance vouchers, providing families with more flexibility and dignity in meeting their needs. For more information, visit the MAVS website.

Society Insight Forum - for Broken Bay members

The Society Insight Forum took place in Hornsby on Monday, October 21, for Broken Bay members. It was a great chance to hear from our CEO, Yolanda Saiz, and her team about the Society's progress on major projects. It turned out to be a fantastic day, bringing members together from all over the region, it was a great opportunity to come together and join in the discussions over coffee and scones.

If you didn't get the chance to join us at the forum, check your email inbox for a copy of the presentation slides from the day.



Michelle Chahine (Broken Bay Central Council President),
Annette Johnstone (Gosford Regional President); Jim
Power (Treasurer, Wyoming Conference)



Carmel Smith (Conference President, Davidson), Leo
Tucker (Exec Director Mission and Formation), Judy
Kelly (Member, Davidson)

CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2024



Everyone deserves access to the essentials needed to live with dignity.

Even in difficult times, people should feel secure knowing they can afford a home, put food on the table, pay their bills, and maintain their health. This is especially true at Christmas. Everyone should be able to bring joy to their loved ones without the stress of unpaid bills, the cost of a Christmas gift, or the worry of providing a meal on Christmas Day.

Unfortunately, for so many people throughout our state this is the reality as we continue to endure an incredibly tough economic climate.

The theme of this year's Christmas Appeal is focusing on the devastating and unrelenting impacts of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and the immediate, practical and emotional support the Society can provide to help people get back on their feet.

As households feel the continued brunt of cost-of-living pressures and have no expenses left to cut back on, our members and programs are responding to increasing demand. Close to 100,000 people have been supported across the state by our members over the last year. For many, they are living in a constant state of 'survival mode' and cannot envision a brighter future.

Fortunately, the Society can offer the support people need with food, clothing, household bills and more, along with connecting them with ongoing assistance and services. Crucially, our members give people in need hope for the future.

The Society thanks our dedicated Members for the important role they play in raising funds for the Christmas Appeal so we can continue to meet the rising need of the most vulnerable people in our community. **The Christmas Appeal was launched on 1 November 2024.** Materials to support your Christmas Appeal efforts, such as posters, donation envelopes and conference booklets have been distributed to Vinnies Support Centres.

Funds raised through the Christmas Appeal will be used to fund our core programs including supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and also people struggling with poverty and cost-of-living pressures.

Greater Sydney Community Sleepout

Friday 30th August



We reached and exceeded our event targets for both fundraising and participant registrations, so a big thank you to everyone for your hard work in setting this event up to be a great success both on the night and in terms of raising awareness and funds for all our Central Councils across Metro.

Thank you for spreading the word amongst your networks!

The fundraising target was \$52,000. And a whopping **\$81,392** was raised via participant sponsorship, donations and auction sales.

The Greater Sydney Community Sleepout attracted around 140 participants who attended in person or online, with about 80 who slept rough overnight. The Community Sleepout was again a great way to get friends, colleagues and community groups involved with Vinnies for just one night. By combining fundraising and awareness, together we can help prevent homelessness from happening in the first place for many people affected by disadvantage in our local communities across Broken Bay, Greater Western Sydney and Broken Bay Central Councils.

This intent is something we never lose sight of and it remains a focus every day.

We had a powerful and enjoyable program for the evening where many participants not only experienced what it is like to sleep out for a night, but also interacted with various Vinnies' programs and services. And all got to listen to the Vinnies Forbes St Band.

We would like to take a moment to acknowledge the participants, volunteers, members, speakers, sponsors and the Forbes Street Band for your generous support and contributions. Your support makes it possible for us to hold this important annual fundraising event.

Spare a moment to help spread the above successes across your networks and teams, of our Greater Sydney Community Sleepout.

Plans are underway for the 2025 Community sleepout, details will be announced in the early new year. For more information or feedback, contact Kate Conroy, the event coordinator at kate.conroy@vinnies.org.au



Sleepout Panellists



*Samoan Church Group.
Western Sydney University
influencers*



*Gilroy Catholic College,
Castle Hill*



Rapid Relief Team and Kate Conroy



Vinnies Members and Staff



Broken Bay members and staff unite for the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout

It was great to attend the Greater Sydney Community Sleepout at the Rydalmere Campus of the University of Western Sydney. I attended with El Herlianto and Barry Finch from the Chatswood Region. Shirley Kelynack, Kenneth Laing and Jodie Davidson represented the Hornsby Region, pictured above.

The format of the evening included a meal of soup and a roll before various speakers told us some big-picture facts and other members related their experiences with Vinnies. There were various stalls outlining activities Vinnies are involved in.

Following are some of the main recent statistics presented:

- 123,000 Australians face homelessness on any given night
- Vinnies NSW helped 85,000 people last year
- 36% of households have had food deprivation on occasion
- 40% of those seeking help are employed
- 1 in 3 have not asked for assistance before
- 1 in 5 of the people Vinnies assist are Indigenous
- The fastest growing group of those seeking assistance are women over 55
- Family violence is the main category of people seeking assistance

The Labor member for Parramatta, Donna Davis, also spoke. Her main points were:

- On average, it takes 5 years to work your way through the social housing list in NSW
- Some people have been homeless for 20 years
- Homeless people's life expectancy is about 25-30 years less than the average Australian
- Homelessness is more of a problem in the Northern Rivers, and in the south and west of the state (impacted by natural disasters)
- The NSW government is spending \$6.6 billion in this year's budget on housing; \$5.6B to build 8400 homes, at an average cost of \$667,000, and \$1 billion on maintenance. Local Governments with the exception of Byron Bay, the City of Sydney and Sydney City are not directly involved in combatting homelessness.

Three Vinnies members, John Neylan (volunteer GWS Vinnies Van), Ken Laing Member, Broken Bay Central Council and Tom Story, President Sydney Regional Council answered questions posed by Ashvini Ambihaiipihar, Regional Director, Metro.

The main themes to their answers were:

- Needs are increasing,
- The workload in Central Sydney is much bigger than Forestville with 2500 people being helped with visits; some people on Newstart live in terrible conditions;
- It's a privilege to meet and help people who are struggling.

Some hardy souls stayed on at the University and slept on a sheet of cardboard with another sheet folded into a V shape to make a small open tent. El, Barry and I ventured home to do our own version of homelessness. Barry and El did some couch surfing while I camped out on the back deck. Fortunately, it was a warm winter's night. However, an hour or two before dawn the wind came up and I got cold because I only had a light sleeping bag as cover. Like previous sleepouts, you wake up tired. I can't imagine how one would manage if there were worries about personal safety and the discomfort.

The aim of the night was to raise funds for the homeless. The whole event reached its target of \$50,000, eventually raising over \$80,000. My Forestville team raised \$1400. Thanks to everyone who supported me. I raised some funds for the homeless but also got to appreciate the misery of homelessness a little more.

John Heike, Forestville Our Lady of Good Counsel Conference

P.S. Assume you want to get into the market for an apartment worth \$667,000. Having saved a deposit you want to take out a \$600,000 loan and you have a decent salary of \$100,000 p.a. At the moment, repayments over 30 years at 6.29% are \$3,700 per month or \$44,400 per year. Tax on your salary is \$22,700, leaving \$32,900 to live on annually, \$632 per week. No crushed avocado breakfasts for you!

Listening to the story of Homelessness

Last night, I took part in the Vinnies Community Sleepout virtually. This is my fifth Community Sleepout and I couldn't be prouder of raising awareness and donations towards the rising issue of homelessness. It was great to represent the Wyong Region and the homeless clients Wyong supports daily.

In my role as Wyong Support Centre Coordinator, I take responsibility for seeing and experiencing homelessness, like the many clients who are homeless that get supported through my support centre and the countless other support centres in Sydney and the Central Coast.

Homelessness can happen to anyone, at any time. Nobody asks to be homeless although, unfortunately, homelessness can impact anyone within a single moment. What can cause homelessness includes:

- Daily living cost rises
- High unaffordable rents or mortgages
- Mental health concerns
- Addictions
- Relationship/Family breakdowns
- Escaping Domestic Violence
- Unsafe living conditions
- Overcrowded accommodation.



My provisions for the Sleepout were two cold sausages, a slice of bread and a bottle of water. For my Sleepout location this year I choose to put myself in the mindset of a homeless client with a pet and having to sleep where I felt safest. So, treating my house as abandoned, I slept on the floor with a small blanket and cushion. I choose a different type of homeless situation each year to get a brief understanding of what the clients we assist in these exact situations face every night. This year I chose an abandoned House setting with a pet.

I gave myself no access to TV, showers, toilet, electricity and all the luxuries that I am grateful for. Instead, I had one small battery torch for light, my mobile phone (no charging allowed) for entertainment, and a companion (my friend's dog I was minding), a small amount of food provisions all restricted to one room. This setting identifies just one situation of many the homeless are faced with. Often throughout Wyong I see clients who identify as homeless and have pets. Often they care for their furry loved ones over themselves without question and keeping them safe and warm is their focus and priority. After I finished virtually attending the Sleepout around 9.30 pm I went to bed.

What I personally experienced throughout the night included:

- Feelings of isolation, vulnerability and being alone
- Feeling sore all over my whole body and the next morning having mobility issues due to sleeping on a hard surface
- Feeling drained, exhausted with no energy
- Having endless amounts of time to think about all my life choices and analyse everything
- Being in a dark room, hoping for it to be daylight soon
- Worrying about my furry friend constantly all night
- Feeling restless, uncomfortable, cold & anxious
- In desperate need of a shower, as I have worn the same clothes all day after my busy solo day at the support centre
- Broken, inadequate quality of sleep.

I quickly put myself in the shoes of the countless people who are homeless. Unfortunately, they endure this situation, and many other situations like this, every night. The next morning, around 5.00 am, besides needing a shower and a decent sleep, I was sore, walking was uncomfortable, my energy level was low, my hunger was high, mental health had set in.

The Central Coast Region, like many other regions, desperately needs more affordable stable housing options. All the Vinnies Support Centres assist people daily who identify as homeless and in need of such supports as housing, food, clothing, blankets, showers, hygiene products, travel supports (opal cards / fuel cards) and many more services, referrals and supports from the community for the holistic assessment of our most vulnerable members of our community.

The feedback I and my team at Wyong VSC receive from the people we assist who are homeless often goes like this: "I just want someone to listen to my story. Every time I come to Wyong VSC you provide me with that and I feel valued, heard, important and a part of the community... Vinnies always listen to my story without judgement and provides me options and a listening ear".

Bradley Dingle, Wyong Vinnies support Centre Coordinator

WINTER APPEAL - SCHOOLS



Loreto students' amazing generosity

On the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of June, Normanhurst Queen of Peace and Waitara our Lady of the Rosary Conferences held our Winter Appeal. This weekend was very cold and wet.

I'm always amazed at how the warm and generous spirit of our volunteers shines through the cold of winter. The girls from Loreto worked on both days. They did not seem to mind the cold and were very eager to assist. They commented that they had a good time and made new friends. They are a wonderful group of students – it's such a pleasure to work with them. I was also assisted by our Young Adults' team and members of the Conference.

The parishioners were very generous with donated items including clothing, blankets, shoes, tinned foods and much more. We were able to really boost the supplies in our pantry shelves at the Hornsby Support Centre. I must also mention the wonderful contribution of Loreto students who have been dropping off groceries and home-cooked meals on behalf of the Centre at Hornsby, all during their school holidays. Their support has been amazing.

Shirley Kelynack, Hornsby Regional President



St Lucy's students embrace charity and justice

I'm excited to share some wonderful news about the amazing efforts of the students at St Lucy's School. On the last day of Term 2, the students were excited as they held a special mufti day and gold coin fundraiser supporting the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal.

The students came together to wear their favourite casual clothes for a good cause. The atmosphere was vibrant, and there was an extra treat – a sausage sizzle generously provided by corporate volunteers from Coles.

This event aimed to raise much needed funds to support individuals and families facing hardships during the winter months.

It was an incredibly proud moment for the students, showcasing their enthusiasm and dedication to making a difference in their communities. Their participation in this fundraiser highlighted their compassion and willingness to support those in need. Seeing young people actively engaging in such meaningful initiatives is truly inspiring.

This event provided an opportunity for fun and fellowship while also emphasising the importance of giving back to the community. By contributing a gold coin and enjoying a sausage sizzle, students directly supported the vital work of the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved, especially the students who live with their own daily challenges, and the staff at St Lucy's, who made this day even more special.

Together, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of those less fortunate, and I'm grateful for the spirit of generosity and care of our local schools. Let's celebrate this fantastic effort and the positive impact it had on our community!

Michelle Chahine, Broken Bay Central Council President



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

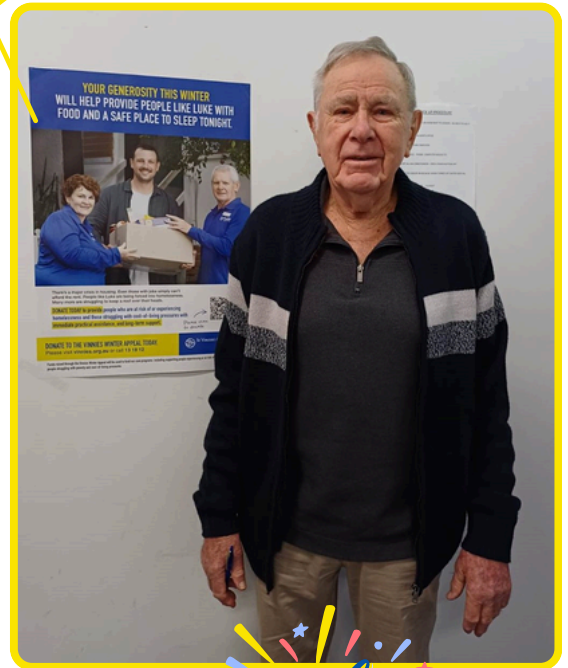
Longstanding member Alan Henson recognised for service to the community!

Hornsby Region has joined in celebrating the recognition of Asquith Conference President Alan Henson's service to local communities. Alan was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the King's Birthday 2024 Honours.

Alan has served as a Member of the Society for over 50 years. He joined the Society in Wagga Wagga when he was in his early 20s. After moving to Sydney, he joined Mosman Conference and assisted vulnerable members of that community for 40 years.

When Alan moved to Asquith he joined that Conference and also worked in the interview room at the Hornsby Vinnies Support Centre.

In 2015, Alan was elected as Conference President of St Patrick's Conference, and he is still in that role today. He has provided exceptional leadership and has created one of the most welcoming and supportive Conferences.



Congratulations!

Comedy for a cause



A combined effort by the teams, members, staff and volunteers from the Gosford and Woy Woy Vinnies Support Centres came to fruition on the evening of Thursday 26th September when a fundraising event "Comedy for a Cause" was held at Drifter's Wharf in Gosford.

Drifter's Wharf, a restaurant and function centre located on the beautiful Gosford waterfront, were a large supporter of the event and donated their premises for the night.

There were four amazing comedians who took to the stage in this really entertaining show. The main attraction was Tommy Dean (photo above), who has appeared on ABC TV's *Spicks and Specks* and ABC Radio's *Thank God it's Friday*. Both a lucky draw and raffles were held on the night with lots of happy winners.

Even though the weather was not a friend on the night, around 100 people attended the event and we raised just under \$3,000. This money will go towards assisting people on the Central Coast who are experiencing homelessness or financial hardship – two sets of circumstances that have seen large increases of need in the community.



LtR: Lisa Dalton, Bradley Dingle, Nikki Willmette, Ashvini Ambihaipahar



Regional President Annette Johnstone

Lisa Dalton, Vinnies Support Centre Coordinator, Gosford



Happy Anniversary Wyoming

Wyoming Our Lady of the Rosary Conference has celebrated a significant milestone – 50 years of Good Works in the parish and local community. For half a century, this dedicated community has faithfully offered a hand up to those in need, providing essential support and hope to countless individuals and families.

As we celebrate this incredible journey, we honour:

Those We Serve: It has been a privilege to walk alongside you, and your resilience continues to inspire us.

Those Who Serve: Your tireless efforts, compassion, and dedication make all the difference in the lives of so many.

Our Benefactors: Your generosity ensures that our mission to help others endures and grows, empowering us to reach further and serve more.

Faithful Supporters: To everyone who has stood by us – thank you for believing in our cause and helping us build a stronger, more caring community.

At the Parish Mass celebrating this occasion, Father Anthony Peter De Souza spoke of how the day's scriptures and Gospel readings related intimately to the mission of the Society. The servant of Isaiah (50:5-9) suffers for their faith and these challenges of discipleship are modelled perfectly in the person of Christ (Mark 8:27-35). Faith and good works go hand in hand – so much so that faith without good works is dead (James 2:14-18).

Fr Peter spoke of our role as Vincentians and urged us on to continue doing these things:

- To foster friendships that break down the walls of division and make pathways of brotherly and sisterly embrace
- To always come back to the critical enthusiasm that was and remains the starting point of our ministry to serve people in great need
- Though we are a large organisation with corporate responsibilities, to never forget the humanity of our ministry to bring the joy of our presence.

We were urged to invest in the poor and invest in education. We were called to be creative in the aim of breaking the cycle of poverty and in creating a new society free from poverty. Here's to the next 50 years of service, faith, and unwavering commitment to bringing the kingdom of God to reality. With each act of love and compassion, we move closer to a world where God's presence is felt by all. May we continue to walk this path with grace, hope, and generosity.

Jim Power, Wyoming Our Lady of the Rosary Conference

In Memoriam

Farewell Ray Robinson

Members of West Gosford St Joseph's Furniture Workshop are mourning the loss of our colleague and friend Ray Robinson, who passed away on Sunday 11 August.

Ray was a valued member of the Workshop – giving generously of his time and skills for over 22 years. He was one of the original members of the team when the Workshop was established.

Ray only recently retired from the Workshop due to ill health. At that time, we were pleased to celebrate his great contribution to the Society of St Vincent de Paul and present him with the Society's Lifetime Membership Award.

Ray was a regular, devoted and enthusiastic worker who applied his skills to craft furniture to support the Vinnies Welfare program. He was one of the world's gentlemen and will be greatly missed by all who worked with him.



We extend our sympathies and prayers to Ray's wife Rosmary and family in their time of sadness. May he rest in peace.

Wayne Gibb, President, St Joseph's Furniture Workshop

Vale John Ryan

Anyone who met John Ryan would know of his great dedication to serving vulnerable members of the community through his many good works as a Vincentian.

For almost 20 years, he was committed to assisting people in need as a member of Berowra St Bernard's Conference. For many of those years he was Conference President, and he was also a long-time Volunteer at the Matthew Talbot Hostel.

John passed away on 6 September. He is very much missed by members of the Berowra Conference and fellow Vincentians in Hornsby Region and beyond.

He was such a great example for all of us to follow – a man of compassion and integrity. John was a family man who loved his wife, children and grandchildren. He was at his best when he was with family.



Our sincere condolences to John's wife Philippa and their family.
We are keeping you all in our prayers.

Shirley Kelynack, Regional President, Hornsby



Chatswood Commissioning Mass

On Saturday 26 October, we joined the community of Chatswood Our Lady of Dolours Parish for our regional Commissioning Mass.

We had a good number of new members, including Sandra Byak, Elizabeth Jung, Irene Margaret, Mar-Lou Cloonan, Jo Karaolis and Maryanne McCarthy of Chatswood Conference. Chatswood Youth Conference has Aaron Espiritu as its new president, with Chloe D'Lima as a new member.

Forestville has John Heike as its new president and John Formosa is a new member. Willoughby has Dominic La Rosa as a new member.

The role of our members is a serious and dedicated one. They live the Gospel serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

Thank you to our celebrants Father Anselam and Deacon Richard. It was great to join with the parish community for a BBQ and refreshments after Mass.

**Barry Finch, Chatswood
Regional President**



Northern Beaches Festival Mass

Our festival mass was held at Freshwater Parish on the evening of Friday 27 September – the Feast Day of St Vincent de Paul. It was well attended by current and old members as well as parishioners and families.

New members were commissioned. And Lea Joris was commissioned as Manly Vale Conference president. There were five members who received life member awards for 20 or more years of service. They were Adrian Calleia (Mona Vale president), Peter Hitchcock (Regional treasurer) and Steve Cargill, Christy Enright and Michael Berry (all members of Freshwater conference).

I would like to thank Father Chima, Father John and everyone who helped make it a spiritual and rewarding evening. I would also like to thank the members who helped supply supper. It was fantastic with a 5-star rating.

Everyone had a great time.

**Mick O'Farrell, Northern Beaches
Regional President**



Thank you Woy Woy Lions Club!

On the evening of Monday 16th September, I attended the monthly meeting of the Woy Woy Lions Club with our Regional President Annette Johnstone and Joanne Riakos of Vinnies Van Services. We were there to share insights about Vinnies and our community initiatives. It was a wonderful night had by all.

Joanne delivered an amazing talk about the Vinnies Vans, highlighting their impact on those in need. I shared details on the essential services provided at our Support Centres, while Annette captivated the audience with her speech on our Conference work. The evening was a resounding success! The Lions Club generously donated \$1,000 to support the Vans initiative. This contribution marks the beginning of what I believe will be a beautiful partnership between our organisations.

The Lions expressed their desire to return to community roots and collaborate with us further. They proposed activities such as making sandwiches, collecting food for hampers, and organising BBQs. Additionally, they showed interest in volunteering during the summer months for the Woy Woy Van. I'm excited about these possibilities and look forward to working together to support of our local community. Joanne and I have also been invited to attend their Sunday car boot sale at the end of September. Joanne and I have proposed that we set up a table and we can take enquires for volunteering and people needing assistance.



LtR: Joanne, Nikki and Annette with Lynee
Caily of Woy Woy Lions Club

Nikki Willmette, VSC Metro Team Leader



Thank you Rockpool Foundation!

In the last edition of the Vinnies Broken Bay newsletter, we reported on the annual Ocean Rockpool Tour – the charity swim – that was held on Saturday 13th January. This event organised by the Rockpool Foundation raises much-needed funds for charities supporting mental health.

Over \$47,000 was raised and Vinnies gratefully accepted \$9,000 for its good works in this area.

Here are two thank you notes I have received from people we have been able to assist. These are from beautiful families and, with our help, we have been able to make a difference in their lives. We are very grateful to the Rockpool Foundation for their generous support.

Mick O'Farrell, Northern Beaches Regional President

Dear Michael and the Rockpool Foundation,

Thank you for your support with my daughter and making it possible for my family to take her to a specialist doctor today for her mental health. We have had a very rough few years, before finding out we could get support through Vinnies. I just didn't know how I was going to get her to a specialist doctor. Her attendance at school has been significantly dropping and I can't put into words how much I have been worried for her.

Today's appointment with a specialist paediatrician went even better than I imagined it could, and my daughter has been given a plan and will begin a medication that will help her manage her emotions daily. So, we can start to look forward and she can start to learn and focus on getting her education back on track so she can have a bright and promising future. It's been a while since I was able to feel hope like I do again today for my daughter. Thank you so much for your help and support from the bottom of my heart, from my whole family. You've given a young lady another chance today and that literally means everything.

*Kind regards,
Kirsten*

To Mick and the Rockpool Foundation,

Thank you most sincerely. I recently found myself needing, hoping and praying for the generosity of the Society of St Vincent de Paul's Brookvale Office. I asked if it would please be okay if I could get assistance paying for my son's newest autism assessment. We need this assessment to be able to apply for NDIS funding.

Because of you and the Rockpool Foundation, they were able to say 'Yes'.

My son was first assessed and diagnosed as autistic when he was three years old. But this timed out at seven years of age. My son is now 14.

I haven't been able to apply for NDIS funding for my son because I have never been able to afford the cost of the re-assessment the NDIS application requires.

St Vincent de Paul at Brookvale and St Cecilia's Parish family have been a wonderful support for us, most especially a beautiful lady, Lyn, without whom I would not have even been considered let alone been gifted this opportunity of financial support. I would like to take this opportunity not only to thank you but also to let you and the Rockpool Foundation members and donors know just how much it means to me to be a recipient of your generosity.

*Thank you all, so very much.
Most Sincerely.*

Back to the future

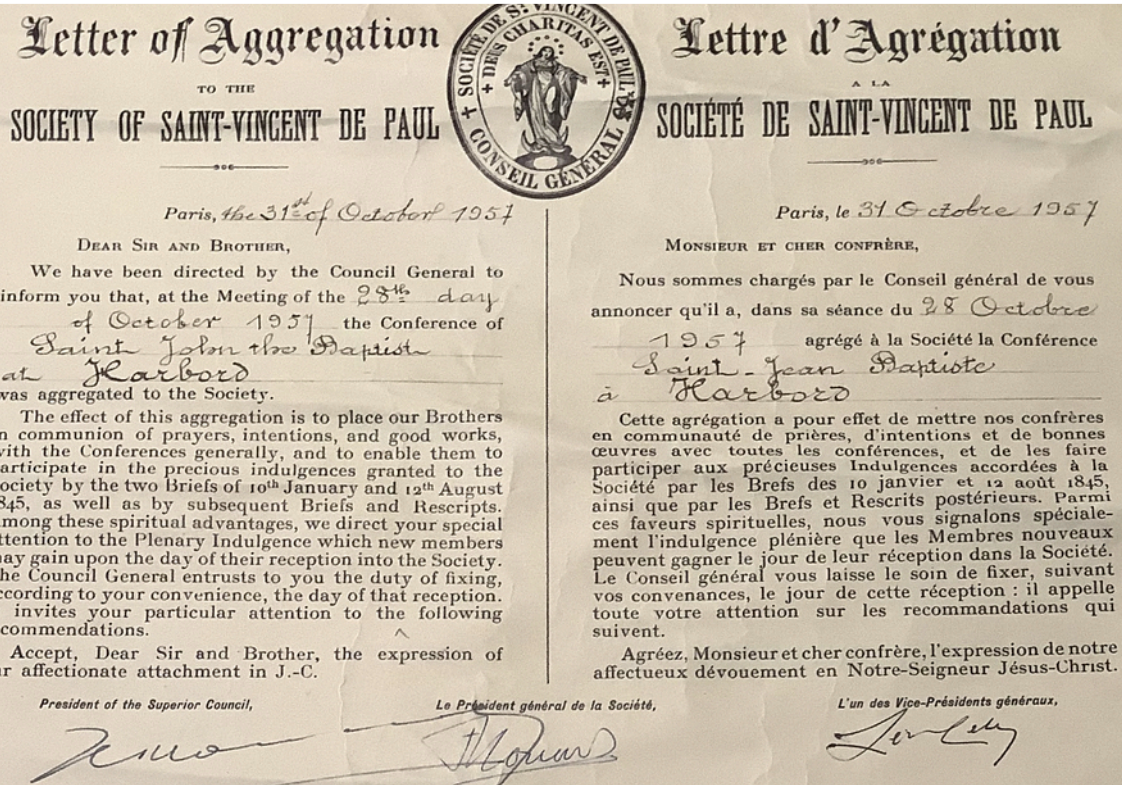
As you can see in this Letter of Aggregation, Harbord Conference was formed on the 28th October 1957. A quick look at the photo shows it in English and French. I don't have any details of members at that time, but I do have a record for March 1978.

We have to remember that in those days only men were members. The ladies in the parish belonged to the St Therese Society. There were 25 members and 11 associate members. They all worked full time and did visits at night. Requests for help came through the parish priest.

The Conference would raise funds by delivering phone books for the Post Office, having cake days after mass and a whole range of activities relying on the generosity of parishioners. Every two months they would have a truck at church for clothing donations.

Some of the phone numbers were 932530 or 972020. How times have changed. They have now all gone to heaven for their just reward. Because of all the hard work of every Society member in those days I feel the Society has grown into an organisation that can reach out to those in need in a more helpful and compassionate way. There are now 8 members in Freshwater (old Harbord) Conference as we carry on the our mission to help those who need our help.

Mick O'Farrell, President, Freshwater John the Baptist Conference



RECOMMENDATIONS WITH WHICH CONFERENCES SHOULD MAKE THEMSELVES FAMILIAR

1. CAREFUL ATTENTION IN THE SELECTION OF MEMBERS

Conferences should exercise the utmost discretion in the admission of new members. Whilst conformity to the laws of the Church is the bare minimum qualification, in actual practice a high standard is expected of those who are proposed for membership. Not only should they be exemplary Catholics, but should bear an irreproachable reputation both in regard to their private lives and to their dealing in business matters. Neglect of these obvious precautions may result in a Conference becoming a purely philanthropic institution instead of a Christian association, and may even give cause for scandal.

It is also advisable that new members should enter our ranks at their own request; that they should appear to be imbued with love of the poor, or at least appear capable of acquiring that love, and lastly, that they should not be of a temperament likely to disturb the peace and cordiality of our meetings.

2. ZEAL IN VISITING THE POOR

The visitation of the poor in their homes is our fundamental work and must be undertaken by our Conferences. It is the easiest work to arrange, and in the same time, the best calculated to develop in

4. FREQUENT INTERCOURSE WITH OTHER CONFERENCES

It is a mistake for a Conference to isolate itself from the rest of the Society, for thus it loses its corporate character. We belong not only to our Conference but to a Society spread over the whole of the Christian world, animated by the same spirit and showing its unity by collective works and demonstrations. To be really flourishing over a prolonged period of time a Conference should keep in touch with the neighbouring Conferences, with the Council to which it is attached and, indirectly, with the Council-General, which governs the whole Society. An excellent and indispensable method of joining in the life of the Society, and of keeping in touch with its development, is the regular reading of the monthly "Bulletin" published in the principal languages of the civilized world. For this reason the Council-General insists as a condition precedent to Aggregation that a Conference shall subscribe to the "Bulletin".

5. DEFERENCE TOWARDS THE CLERGY

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is essentially a lay Society. This characteristic which has always been recognized by the Sovereign Pontiffs requires that Presidents, Secretaries and members should invariably be laymen. But the Society is a Catholic body professing unreserved obedience to the Church. No work should be undertaken which is contrary to the teaching of the Church.



John Neylan presenting cake to Gabby Scanlon (Teacher, Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta) for 30 years of Busking for Vinnies. Gabby Scanlon was one of the original OLMC girls that started performing in Busking for Vinnies in 1990.

Busking for Vinnies Parramatta – 2024

Schools across Western Sydney have brought music to the streets of Parramatta as part of the annual 'Busking for Vinnies' initiative this August. 'Busking for Vinnies' has been a long-standing community outreach event, supported by Parramatta Council, held by the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW annually in Parramatta since the 1990s to raise awareness of the Society's services in the region.

Our Lady of Mercy College in Parramatta launched 'Busking for Vinnies' on Wednesday 21 August at Centenary Square. Parramatta Marist High School (Westmead), Mt Saint Benedict College (Pennant Hills), St Edmund's College (Wahroonga) and St John Paul II Catholic College (Schofields) also performed throughout August.

"It was delightful to have 'Busking for Vinnies' once again to highlight the musical talents of schools in the community and concurrently raising awareness of the Society's services," said Roydon Ng, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Metropolitan Schools Engagement Officer. It's wonderful to have Our Lady of Mercy College, Mt Saint Benedict College and St Edmund's College back for another year, as well as welcoming Parramatta Marist High School and St John Paul II Catholic College on board for the first time. It's also a great way for Vinnies to engage with the local community and showcase the services that are available for people to access in the area, including our van services and support centres.

St Vincent de Paul Society **NSW members supported close to 11,000 people across Greater Western Sydney over the past financial year.** Demand for support in the region increased by 24% from the previous year with close to half of the people assisted experiencing housing stress and more than a third requesting assistance for the first time.

The Metropolitan Schools Engagement Team thanks each of the schools for a series of wonderful musical performances and thanks Winston Hills Conference for providing members to engage with the public in discussing the assistance that is available.

'Busking for Vinnies' raised \$6,643.70 in 2024 and took place at Centenary Square, Parramatta at Our Lady of Mercy College (Parramatta) – Wednesday 21st August, Parramatta Marist High School (Westmead) – Thursday 22nd August Mt St Benedict College (Pennant Hills) and St Edmund's College (Wahroonga) – Tuesday 27th August St John Paul II Catholic College (Schofields) – Thursday 29th August

Roydon Ng, Metropolitan Schools Engagement Officer



Centre: Donna Davis (Member for Parramatta)
Left: John Neylan (Busking for Vinnies coordinator). Right: Roydon Ng



WATCH HERE



Roydon Ng with Vinnies Youth volunteers, David Brogden (Winston Hills Conference), and John Neylan

Buddies Day stories

The Buddies Day program has achieved significant success, thanks in large part to grant funding that supports children from families assisted by Vinnies. This program provides these children with valuable opportunities to challenge themselves, interact with their peers, benefit from positive role models, and enjoy a respite from any difficulties they may be facing at home.



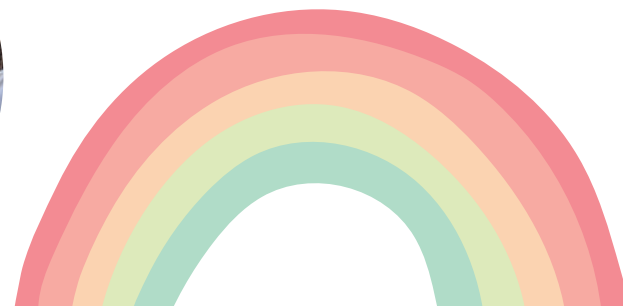
We offer two distinct types of Buddies Day Programs. The first involves **educational outings**, such as visits to venues like the Reptile Park, where children engage in hands-on learning about native Australian fauna and flora. The second type of program involves **activities conducted at local high schools**. Here, high school students design and lead activities for the children, gaining experience in volunteer work. Activities have included cupcake decorating, tie-dyeing t-shirts, various arts and crafts, ball games, dance parties, treasure hunts, face painting, and more.

Several success stories highlight the impact of the program.

For instance, Rachel (name changed for privacy) had recently relocated to the area after her family was displaced due to domestic violence. Over a six-month period in a Vinnies safe house, Rachel participated in five Buddies Day events. She remained highly engaged throughout, with her favourite part being the fun bags filled with toys and prizes. Upon moving to more stable housing, Rachel excitedly shared with her case worker, "I now have enough toys to put in my new room."

Another example is Joey (name changed for privacy), who joined the program four months ago. Initially, Joey was very quiet, shy, and reserved, staying close to his sister during his first Buddies Day and avoiding participation in activities. However, with the continued support of students and Vinnies volunteers, Joey gradually began to engage more. By his second Buddies Day, he started interacting independently with other children and volunteers. By the end of that day, he was so enthusiastic about the experience that he eagerly enquired about the next event for the following week. These success stories underscore the significance of the Buddies Day program and its positive impact on children at a crucial developmental stage.

The Buddies Day program plays a crucial role in enriching the lives of children from families supported by Vinnies, offering them invaluable opportunities for growth, social interaction, and joy during challenging times. The positive transformations observed in participants, such as increased confidence and engagement, highlight the program's profound impact.



MiniVinnies



🎉 Mini Vinnies Gathering - 24 July 2024 🎉

What an incredible day! The Metro Schools Team organised a heartwarming and impactful Mini Vinnies Gathering, **bringing together 25 schools from the Sydney, Parramatta, and Broken Bay dioceses.** The theme, **"Being the Hands and Feet of Christ,"** resonated deeply as students participated in a series of workshops and activities designed to put their faith into action.

Throughout the day, students engaged in social justice workshops focusing on:

- **Homelessness:** Understanding the challenges faced by those without a home and exploring ways to provide support and dignity to our homeless neighbours.
- **Migrants/Refugees:** Learning about the experiences of migrants and refugees, and how we can create a welcoming and supportive community for everyone.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Discussing the importance of caring for our common home and implementing sustainable practices to protect our planet.
- **Vinnies Van Services:** Discovering the vital role of Vinnies Vans in providing food, companionship, and essential services to those in need.

These workshops were not just about learning but about empowering our young leaders to turn their faith into action. By participating in these activities, students demonstrated remarkable compassion, understanding, and a commitment to making a tangible difference in their communities.

The theme "Being the Hands and Feet of Christ" came alive as students embodied the principles of love, service, and justice. They left with a deeper understanding of how they can contribute to a more just and compassionate world, truly living out their faith in meaningful ways.

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to this inspiring event! Your dedication and spirit are what make these gatherings so special. 🌟🙌 #MiniVinnies #FaithInAction #SocialJustice #Community #MetroSchoolsTeam

See a recap of the Mini Vinnies Gathering 2024

at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzXmLkwq388>



St Patrick's Primary, Parramatta at Mini Vinnies Gathering 2024



Sacred Heart Primary, Villawood at Mini Vinnies Gathering 2024



Giving a hand up for Vinnies

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW

ROSALIE RENDU FORUM 2024



Each Anti-Poverty Week, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW holds the Rosalie Rendu Forum, a discussion bringing together a panel of distinguished women, named in recognition of Sister Rosalie Rendu's contribution to the Society, to offer insights into pressing social justice issues.

The 2024 Rosalie Rendu Forum put the focus on rental reform by proposing the question, "is ending no grounds evictions the end of the story?"

We were delighted to have Trina Jones (NSW Rental Commissioner), Dr Jemima Mowbray (Tenants' Union of NSW), Dr Penelope Bowyer-Pont (Macquarie University) and Anna Scott (Vinnies Services) join us for an online discussion moderated by Solange Frost (Vinnies South Regional Director).

Issues raised during the evening included the experiences of people supported by the Society in navigating the rental market, the impact of the government's proposed reforms, examples of rent regulation from around the world, the need to improve the quality of rental housing and giving renters the confidence to exercise their rights.

The panel also fielded questions from close to 100 attendees watching online and at viewing events on topics such as fair limits for rent increases, offering tenants longer-term leases, reforms for boarding houses and the role of the NSW Rental Commissioner.

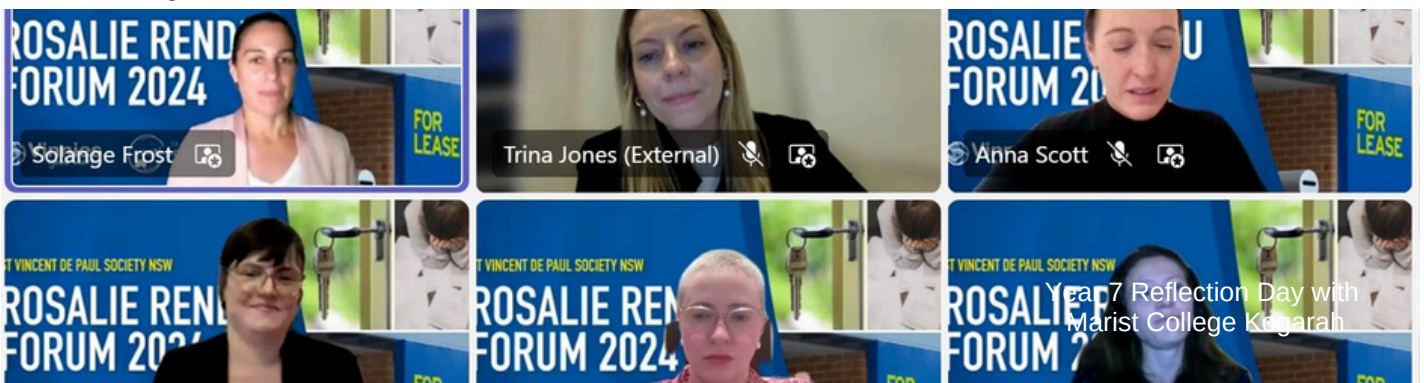
The evening concluded with each of the panelists offering hopes for the future:

"I personally would like to see a cap on rents that is controlled between tenancies, not resetting at the beginning of each new tenancy."

- Dr Penelope Bowyer-Pont

[Visit our website to read the full article.](#)

Rob Crosby, Vinnies NSW Communications Coordinator



Our recommendations for a more just and compassionate NSW - new Social Justice Statements

Imagine an Australia where people have affordable and healthy housing that feels like home. Where everyone can live safely within their own homes and be treated with respect in their relationships. Or where everyone can access the daily essentials they need - like nutritious food and affordable energy.

These are just some of the aspirations that the Society NSW's new Social Justice Statements set out. You can find them now on the Social Justice website. The Statements, approved by State Council, outline the Society's social policy positions. They were developed by the Policy and Advocacy Team in collaboration with the NSW Social Justice Committee following consultation with staff, services and the sector.

Together the Social Justice Statements set out the Society NSW's recommendations in eight priority areas of homelessness, housing, renting, cost of living, domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol, climate justice and temporary protection visa. A First Nations Social Justice Statement is currently under consultation and development.

So how can you help to promote our recommendations to create a more just and compassionate society? We encourage all members, volunteers and staff to read and promote these Statements. In particular, you can help by advocating for the recommendations set out in the Statements with your local MP or local council member and discuss the key issue/s that your region, suburb or community faces.

Contact social.justice@vinnies.org.au for more information.

FIND OUR STATEMENTS VIA OUR WEBSITE

CLICK HERE



NSW > Advocacy > Social Justice Statements

[Find Help](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[Shops](#)

[Advocacy](#)



Social Justice Statements

The St Vincent de Paul Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it. We are compelled to advocate for a more just and compassionate society, and to speak out on the barriers that keep people trapped in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

The Statements are the Society's policy positions on priority issues.

For more information about Vinnies social justice advocacy or to get involved in our Social Justice Network, visit socialjustice.vinnies.org.au





1800 478 776

DID YOU KNOW.....that the Vinnies Safeguarding Team can offer additional referral information and supports to people you assist, where there are children or vulnerable adults involved?

Safeguarding will help you meet your legislative obligations and help you to ensure the people you are assisting are receiving the best possible supports from many different organisations.

If in doubt, give us a shout.

1800 478 776

Vinnies members opening doors for a Mum and children

Two caring St Vincent de Paul Society members completed a home visit to a Mum and her two children. The family of three were renting one room in a house filled with other renters – all strangers to the Mum and her children. Due to the children living in overcrowded conditions, the members phoned Safeguarding with their concern. The members were happy for Safeguarding to call the Mum to discuss possible supports.

During the Mum's discussion with Safeguarding, it came out that she didn't want to engage with any housing services for help as she had thought that it meant she and her children would have to move to the outer suburbs of Sydney, disrupting the childrens' schooling and social networks. She thought her only option to remain living in her local area was to save harder to eventually afford a private rental whilst living in one room in a house of strangers.

Vinnies members continue to help with food and material supports, and the call to Safeguarding resulted in opening doors for the Mum to seek support from housing providers and find alternative accommodation in her local area.

Thank you to our wonderful members!!

MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS (MAVS)

How to create your Account

All Member and Volunteers are required to create an account when using our new MAVS Website for the first time. This is to ensure your account is secured and will be aligned to the existing details we currently have on file for you. You will only be required to do this once.

1. Please click on the following link: [Member and Volunteer Profile](#)
2. Click on 'Login' button located at the top right-hand corner (fig 1)
3. Click on 'Create an account' (fig 2)

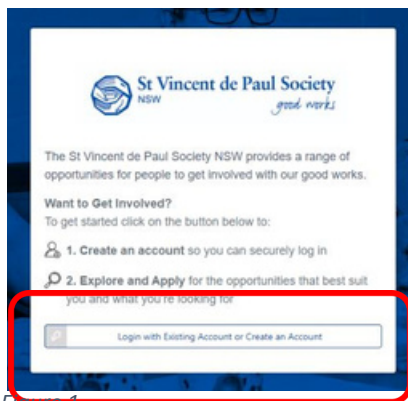


Figure 1

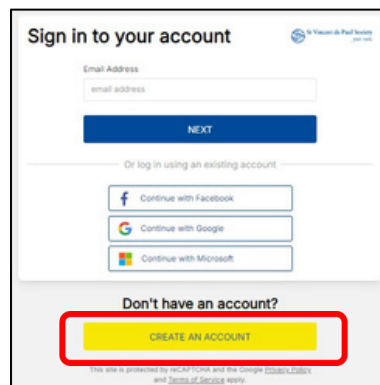


Figure 2

Note: For the next step, please use the email address you may have previously used for training.

4. Type your email into the 'Email Address' text box field and click on **Continue with Email** (fig 3). You will be sent a 6-digit code to this email address, which you will need to enter.
5. Create a password and click on **Create my account**. (fig 4)
6. Type your 'Mobile Number' in the mobile field. (fig 5) You will be sent a 6-digit code to this email address, which you will need to enter.

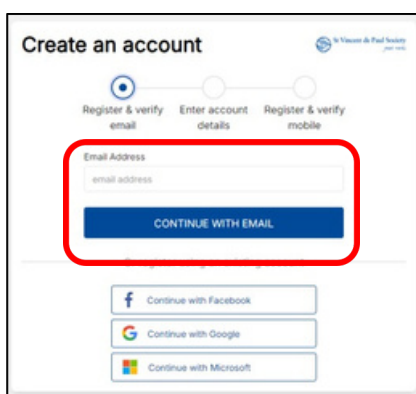


Figure 3

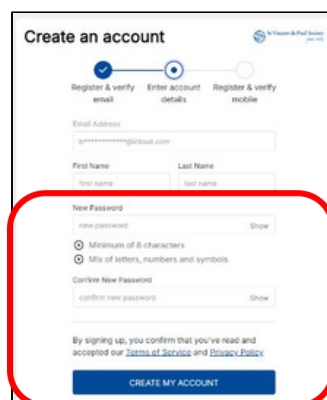


Figure 4

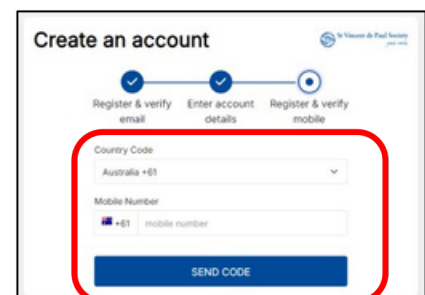


Figure 5

Note: If you miss the time for the verification code or it does not arrive in your phone, then click on "Resend Code" below the "Verification Code" text box

7. Click on 'Next' Button
8. Click on the link to read and then 'Accept' the End User Licence Agreement.

Congratulations on successfully setting up your account!

MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS (MAVS) continued...

You should now be on your Profile page and have the menu on the left which includes the below options (fig 3):






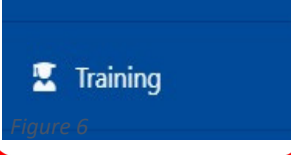
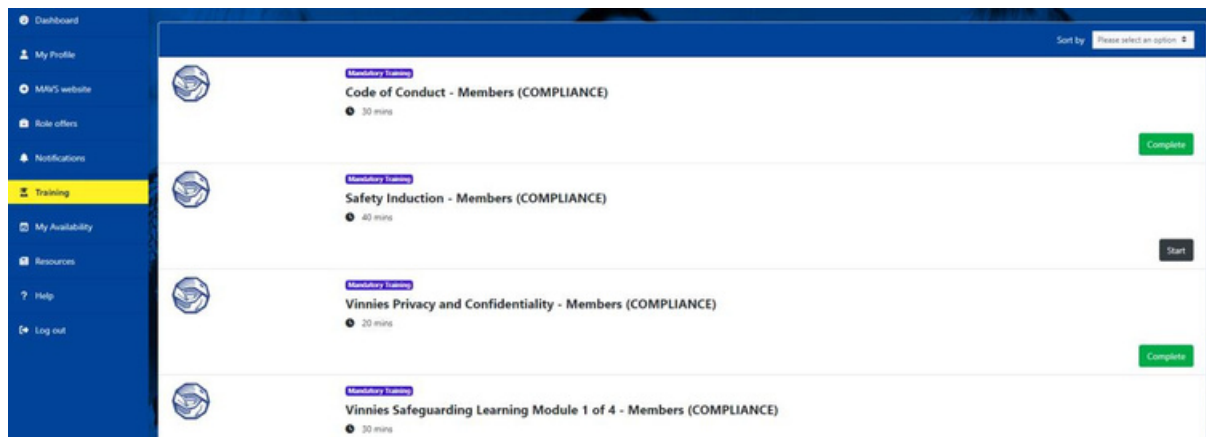
	Dashboard: you can view your active member and/or volunteer position/roles
	My Profile: you can access and update your update your personal information i.e. address and emergency contact details.
	MAVS Website: a quick link back to the MAVS Website. You can access resources, news articles and Events
	
	
	Training: Access to complete Learning modules, including compliance learning.

Figure 6

View of the training page



If you are having difficulty creating your account or accessing your profile, please contact us at mavs.support@vinnies.org.au for assistance or speak with your local regional office staff.