

# A CALL TO SERVE

VINCENTIAN STORIES

*us; I and you;  
all of us; serving  
Victorians in need  
during Covid*



St Vincent de Paul Society  
VICTORIA  
*good works*

2021 CHAPTER

**“All have the right to lay their burdens on us . . . Be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.”**



*Blessed Rosalie Rendu*

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## OUR MISSION

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.

## OUR VISION

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering 'a hand up' to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.

## OUR VALUES

### **Commitment**

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values.

### **Compassion**

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement.

### **Respect**

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions.

### **Integrity**

Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values.

### **Empathy**

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception.

### **Advocacy**

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice.

### **Courage**

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future.



## STATE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members, Volunteers and Staff,

How do we start to describe the last 18 months? I think on a positive note, we acknowledge the wonderful efforts of our members, volunteers and staff who kept supporting Victorians in need in such an unprecedented, uncertain time.

The pandemic took centre stage in all our lives and undoubtedly will continue to be a significant feature until vaccinations and adaptations help us settle into what are changed circumstances to how we live.

We did not have an A Call to Serve event last year as we were still coming to terms with Covid realities. We could not have predicted how bumpy the ride would be and how long it would last. With all this uncertainty, I am very pleased we are able to honour another series of wonderful Vincentians this year.

I am very proud of the way in which the St Vincent de Paul Society in Victoria adapted its work practices to ensure we are always there for people in need. As we know from past experience, disasters and crises always affect those on the margins the most. You will read in these six stories, about the determination of our members and volunteers, backed up by staff, to ensure we continued supporting people.

These stories represent the humility, decency, hard work and spirituality that are the hallmark of our Vincentian spirit. We celebrate conference life, our Young Vinnies and two of our city-based soup vans. The vans didn't miss a beat in terms of not only remaining in service through lockdowns and restrictions, but also doubling the amount of meals provided and meeting a new need.

This year is also an opportunity to honour the passing of Leo Holt and his many years of service to the soup vans. The Collingwood/Richmond Soup Vans story is dedicated in his memory.

I look forward to having an honouring ceremony later in the year when vaccination rates and easing of restrictions allow this. This is always a joyous, coming together event for Vincentians and their loved ones.

Until then, keep safe and hold onto hope.

**Kevin McMahon**

State President

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria



*Always engage with an  
open heart and open mind,  
devoid of judgement and with  
no expectations.*

# GRACE PULIS

## NETWORKING SUPREMO

Many Vincentians become members through introductions from other members. In the case of Grace Pulis, it was active involvement in the life of her local community that gradually brought her in touch with the St Vincent de Paul Society. Grace is an exemplary networker: one connection soon spills over into another, with bountiful benefits flowing to many recipients.

In 2006, after an earlier than planned end to her career as a university administrator, Grace joined a self-help group called GROW. Her strong work ethic, drive, curiosity to learn and 'can do' attitude were noticed and she was encouraged to take on leadership positions. She became President of the Footscray GROW Group and then set up and led the Laverton Group.

Grace was invited to attend a meeting of the Good Shepherd No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) in Hobsons Bay and became the GROW representative on this committee. Unbeknownst to Grace, the plans to set up new NILS programs were auspiced by the Society.

This introduction to a Society Special Work allowed Grace to get acquainted with conference work. She recalls joining Laverton/Altona Meadows Conference member Lawrence Chee on a home visit. In 2010, she became a member. Grace has many qualities and skills that others readily identify as leadership material. Very soon, she was being groomed to nominate for conference president, followed by further grooming to nominate for Altona Regional Council President.

Grace is always expanding her community involvement and wears many hats, participating on inter-agency committees that cover issues such as emergency relief, refugee settlement, housing and homelessness, youth and parenting. The Hobsons Bay Inter-Agency Network is dear to her heart.

Grace has been appointed as one of the Network's Custodians, a highly respected role that involves facilitating the exchange of knowledge, sustaining the Network and liaising with Council.

Grace sees the importance of being 'at the table' where decisions are made but also loves one-on-one contact where she can listen to a companion and help them identify a path towards a better life. She has learned over the years to always engage with an open heart and open mind, devoid of judgement and with no expectations. She is also a great mentor to others and even happy doing necessary administration. There is a discipline and dedication to doing every task to the best of her ability.

Grace keeps an eye on internal matters while scanning the environment for opportunities and gaps to be filled. Her hands-on approach ensures she is up to date on what is happening at conference level: she notes that they are seeing more refugees losing their visas and long waits for processing by Centrelink. Externally, she is across housing matters, with more developers wanting a slice of the action in growth corridors, and a lack of affordable housing. She makes sure these issues are discussed at conference and regional meetings, so that members understand the impact, know how to respond and know where to go for help.

### **A journey of growth**

Meeting Grace is to be taken on a journey; she herself uses the analogy of a journey often. The fact her volunteering journey started at GROW has an interesting symmetry. She sees the last few years as ones of strong personal growth for her.

Going further back, her life journey is a familiar migrant one. She was seven years old when

her family immigrated to Australia. She was quickly relied upon to act as interpreter and decoder of Australian ways for her parents. She believes that built confidence and enabled early development of skills in finding out what she needed to know. Her desire to help and willingness to always advocate for those unable to speak up for themselves possibly sprang from this early experience.

A recent example involves a refugee who had obtained a permanent resident visa and established a good life in the western suburbs. Even though his English is limited, he held a job in a factory for many years, has a car and is paying off his house. Applying for citizenship took a bad turn and he was stripped of his visa and right to work. Grace rallied around him, networking extensively, seeking legal assistance to fight his case for residency, successfully making a submission for funds to tide him over so that he would not lose his house and could make essential payments while his residency status was resolved.

Grace is known for her desire to ensure her members are well resourced and supported. Grace has put a great deal of time and effort into developing a directory of service providers and other useful resources for members, incorporating information about local agencies, what they do, and how they can assist companions.

She is currently working with the Resources Officer at Gerard Ward House to redesign Hands@Work to make it more user friendly and relevant. It will include a template incorporating the kind of information she has developed for her own region but which is easily transferable to all regions.

She keeps herself up to date on any policy changes that may affect companions. Nothing beats hard work and Grace is always well prepared and highly organised. As well, she will always go that extra mile to meet someone's needs.

She demonstrates broad and comprehensive understanding of issues affecting her region,

both at a macro and more local level: housing unaffordability; the new emergence of the 'working poor' through Covid; the need for better service mapping across new and old areas.

## **Leadership**

Grace reveals that the urging for her to take on leadership roles has at times been overwhelming. She understands why members are often reluctant to nominate for office-bearer positions. She recognises that some conferences have many members with professional skills; others, such as parts of western region, don't.

*I'd urge people not to shy away from these roles. It's a great experience. Sure, we need the right skills and that means identifying potential members and providing training, not just online training; skills can be developed with mentoring, role modelling and experiences that build confidence.*

Grace believes everyone has strengths; they need to recognise this and, together, much can be achieved with the array of skills. In her experience, if you take the role seriously, you can learn to be across what to do. Past presidents and others will always help.

Organisation is a skill that comes naturally to Grace. She recognises being well prepared reduces stress. Running a meeting well, having a good agenda, people understanding the part they play, are all vitally important to the smooth running of a conference and a region.

*The Society provided very rewarding experiences for me in stepping up. I remember attending a National Congress with the theme of 'Togetherness' – I was enthused by this sense of us all working together for the same objectives. There are many opportunities to learn and feel part of the 'whole', such as regional presidents and regional treasurers' gatherings.*

## **Covid**

While everyone talks about how challenging the past 18 months has been due to Covid, Grace emphasises it has shown how resilient the St Vincent de Paul Society is, as are many other



agencies. She saw how her area responded and addressed need. She was touched by Hobson Bay Council's reaching out to support the Society. They donated food to Laverton Conference. Agencies banded together. Grace praises the collaborative spirit across the inter-agency committee, the Laverton Hub – so many working together to ensure people were getting food and were supported.

*I led the region from interstate for several months; we learned much more is possible than we thought. We acquired new skills with Zoom. We could use Zoom even more, such as for assessing our companions' needs. Of course, it depends on [the] individual, but overall, the phone worked well in replacing person-to-person contact.*

Grace acknowledges often the contribution of other agencies and how well they collaborate together. As Grace showed us around, introducing us to many people in other agencies, there was a resounding message from them to Grace: "We need you!"

*I often tell people that I do this work with the Society for selfish reasons. I get a lot of joy from it, it keeps me sane and busy. I also enjoy the social interaction with members, companions and staff at Gerard Ward House.*

### **Growth Corridors Plan**

Grace stresses that the issue of recruitment is becoming more urgent, not only because of the ageing of members but due to the added demand coming from the growth corridors around Melbourne. Grace is enthusiastic to nominate for president of the new regional council being established to service the Growth Corridor Plan. The western region includes some of the fastest growing suburbs in Australia. As new developments are built, Grace sees councils keen to allocate new services there. There is a distinct need for better overall service planning and mapping, and understanding of needs. Grace sees this is an enormous task but one that she would relish being part of. Her term as Altona Regional Council President ends in October. She will be looking for a new challenge.



Mitch Hodge from Unsplash



Kelly Sikkema from Unsplash

### **Record of service Grace Pulis**

- 2013-** Member, Laverton/  
Altona Meadows Conference
- 2017-** Regional President,  
Altona Regional Council
- 2019-** Vice President, Laverton/  
Altona Meadows Conference

# KEVIN JONES

## HUMBLE SERVANT LEADER

Humility is one of the qualities valued in Vincentians but it can get in the way of a good story. Kevin Jones, with 55 years of service across five conferences, is the epitome of a humble man. It took some coaxing and the testimonies of conference members who respect him to gain a full picture of his contribution.

Longevity of service also means that Kevin has witnessed many changes, and poverty in various guises. He started as a member before the introduction of payments to single mothers and the family allowance; and witnessed earlier waves of refugees arriving in country towns looking for work.

His own town of Traralgon has grown from a population of 6,000 to 26,000 in the 35 years he has lived here. He has seen the different ways the Society adapted or perhaps resisted adapting adequately. It is a valuable legacy and worthy of respect.

Kevin tells of coming from a poor background; being one of nine. He was spiritually motivated from an early age to help others. As a teacher, Kevin and his family were moved to new towns often. After a short stint as a Foundation member of Montmorency's St Francis Xavier's Conference, Kevin and his wife Maureen and their first three children moved to Horsham, then Stawell, back to Horsham, then to Traralgon, where he lives today, with a short period in Wangaratta. One of the first things Kevin did in each town was to sign up with the local conference.

In 1968, arriving in the Wimmera District at 26 years of age, he was a very young member. He had to contend with some opposition to change from older members.

*I suggested that we should have women members, particularly as they were doing most of the work at that time. The old blokes were adamant: We're not*

*having women in this conference. If they come in, we're out! I did momentarily think that might not be such a bad thing.*

*Fortunately, we got a ladies' conference started. In a country town, people take notice of changes. It probably challenged the older men to think about their contribution.*

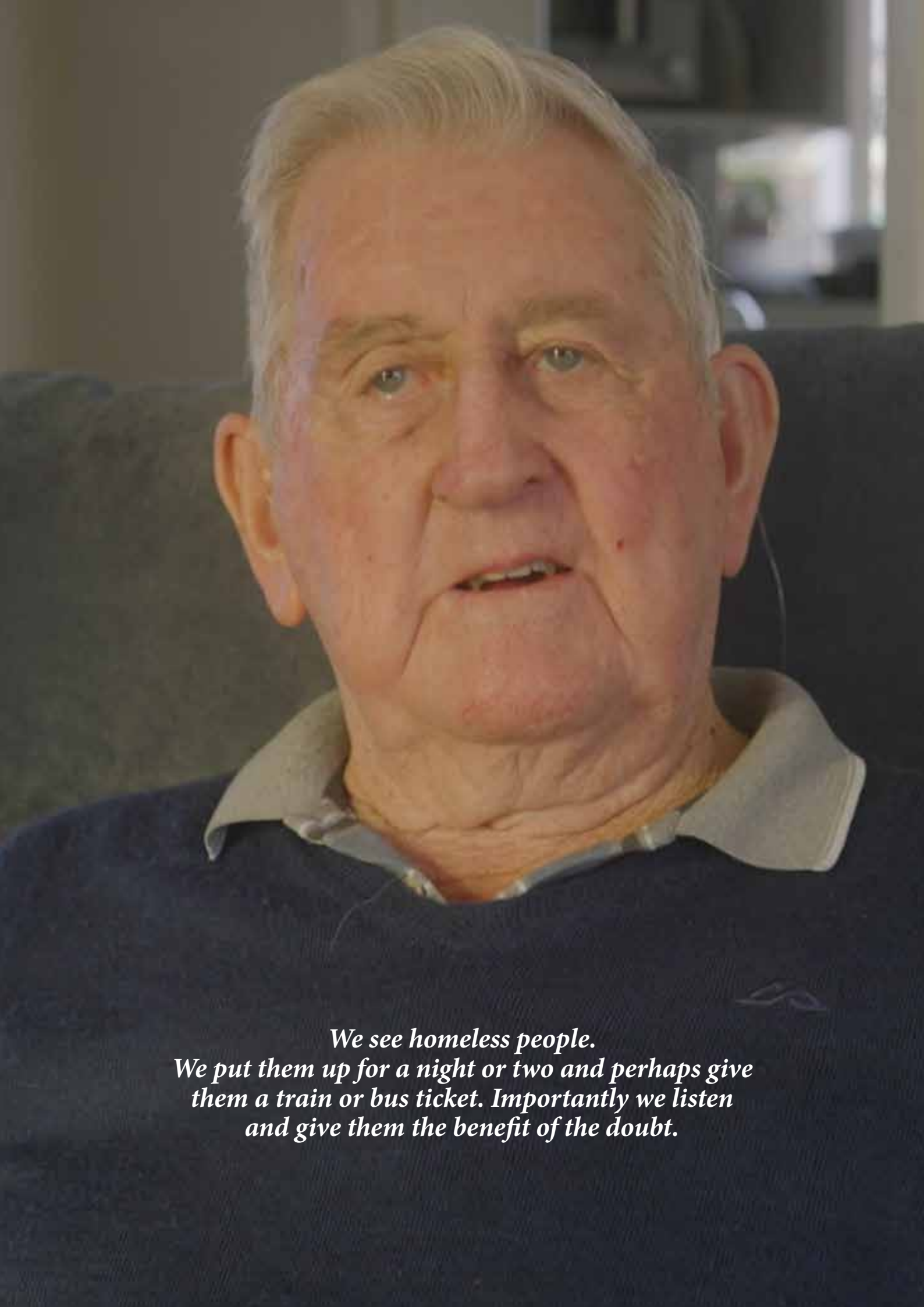
There were challenges with parish priests not supportive of promoting the work of the Society, but Kevin persevered, getting a store opened in Horsham.

Overall though, Kevin credits many of the older members he encountered in the early years for a very good, hands-on induction. He remembers being taken with a group of Horsham members to visit a new innovation in Coonabarabran, a Vinnies Centre. This provided the evidence required to proceed with the Horsham Centre.

He also remembers another memorable trip to attend the Pope's public appearance at Randwick Racecourse., This deepened his understanding of the Society's spirituality, fellowship and hospitality, as a local member opened his home to them all.

It is in Traralgon where Kevin's dedicated Society service is now most apparent, covering more than 30 years and still continuing today, albeit at a reduced capacity. Kevin has served as Conference President and had two-and-a-half terms as Regional President. He has put these roles to good use.

Kevin is persistent, task-focused and has a gently challenging way, which allows him to ask pertinent questions, without getting people offside. Members recognise that he is considering a situation in order to make an informed and considered decision. The Rule is his guiding light – he knows it back to front. What would Frederic do in the same circumstances? Members respect him for this.



*We see homeless people.  
We put them up for a night or two and perhaps give  
them a train or bus ticket. Importantly we listen  
and give them the benefit of the doubt.*

Kevin points out the framed Certificate of Aggregation for Traralgon Conference. This is, in effect, a license to operate. Although the conference was started in 1937, the necessary paperwork had never been completed. This was one task Kevin took on when he arrived in the town in the late 1970s. He is always willing to take on what others feel unable to perform. His depth of knowledge is a valuable resource to many and he shares it willingly. As Conference President, Lyn Burns explains:

*With all the changes over the years and new protocols to be adhered to, Kevin has always been steadfast in remembering his commitment to the poor and disadvantaged. There have been numerous times that Kevin has been able to reassure and confirm to the members and volunteers that we are adopting a stance in keeping with The Rule's relevant excerpts.*

### Traralgon's Assistance Centre

Kevin's experience in Horsham encouraged him to help start a centre in Traralgon. Clothes and goods were initially collected at a member's home. Then,



Andy Montes de Oca from Unsplash

a clothing and bric-a-brac sale was held at O'Mara House, the aged care home, formerly owned by the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Eventually, the Society bought a block of land at 43 Kay Street, the current location of the St. Vincent de Paul Centre, officially opened in 1987.

The emerging need to expand the Centre motivated the purchase of the adjoining block. This enabled the Centre to be doubled in size.

For a man who strongly acknowledges women's contribution, it is fitting that in 2017, Kevin's cherished assistance centre be given the name of Sr Rosalie Rendu. Sr Rosalie, provided care to the poor in 19th century Paris, visiting them in squalid, overcrowded slums. Today, with active membership consisting of 22 women and 9 men, women form the backbone of Traralgon Conference.

Asking Kevin to show us around the Centre is to see a man come alive with purpose. The Assistance Centre embodies his beliefs and values and is undoubtedly one of the jewels in the Society's Gippsland assets.

It is a great asset and is well known by many; they know what they can get and when it is open. The conference does home visits but finds, increasingly, many people prefer to come here rather than have the members visit them in their homes.

*Some people have never had visitors in their own homes. It takes time to find a launching spot to start a conversation. When everyone is relaxed, people open up. You often then discover the depth of need they haven't initially revealed. Admittedly, time is hard to make, and with only so many members, we have to avoid spreading ourselves too thinly. We try to provide quality time.*

Ample storage enables all sorts of provisions other than furniture. The storage has been critical with disasters and Gippsland has many; floods and fires can hit in relatively quick succession.

The pantry is laden with food. With separate commercial fridge and freezer, along with an extensive stock of grocery items, both purchased and donated, the Assistance Centre is able to provide a weekly or fortnightly food hamper for people in need. On a weekly basis, the centre helps

approximately 30 families/singles with a food hamper. Since 1993, Rotary Club of Traralgon Central has run a program called “Give a Damn, Give a Can.” In recent times, 10,000 cans of food have usually been donated to the Assistance Centre each year.

The Centre is a meeting place for the conference. The parish also uses it for meetings and Mick’s Kitchen, run by parishioners, holds a meal once a week, in the large meeting room, usually serving between 70-80 meals. The commercial kitchen makes catering much easier. The Soup Van operates from here, two nights per week.

Every Christmas the Conference put together hampers and toys collected by motorcyclists in Latrobe Valley. Last Christmas, the Assistance Centre delivered 88 Christmas Hampers/Toys to families.

*Working together is how we operate, be it with The Salvos, the Anglican Church, Rotary, or any other agencies involved in addressing need.*

*People ask for the usual things: food in particular, help with bills and advice on steps to take with outstanding accounts, vouchers for prescriptions, education expenses, transport costs.*

*We see homeless people. We put them up for a night or two and perhaps give them a train or bus ticket. Importantly we listen and give them the benefit of the doubt.*

*Social welfare payments have helped enormously, but this doesn’t mean people necessarily manage better. Emergencies and crises rear up and we have issues such as the pokies and TAB, which can entrench existing challenges.*

*Our charter asks us to do what we can and respond with an open heart while being fiscally responsible. This is the base from which our members and volunteers operate.*

### **Impact of Covid**

Traralgon responded quickly to Covid, moving in adherence to Society guidelines to contactless forms of assistance. Hampers were made available and people complied with the contactless collection and delivery of these. The Soup Van adjusted its way of providing food and Mick’s Kitchen moved to providing take away.

The Conference President also enacted lots of ways to keep members engaged with, for example, a regular newsletter. The members were missing their usual routine and contact — they are a very happy and cohesive team. Attrition of members has been understandably high for many conferences but not for Traralgon. Kevin attributes this to President Lyn’s efforts.

Kevin proudly shows us a hand-made statue of St Vincent de Paul given to him by Horsham Conference. This echoes the centrality of the Society in his life.

*If you have a desire to help someone who’s less fortunate than yourself, give SVDP a go. If you don’t find what you’re looking for, nothing’s lost. We are happy to be part of a person’s search for the best volunteering fit. We don’t focus on whether you are a Catholic; only to adhere to Christian philosophy.*

In the last chapter of our lives, we all hope to have made a difference. Kevin certainly has: as a teacher, as a SVDP stalwart, as a defender of its foundational story and supporter of the team. As Lyn Burns, who has known Kevin for more than 30 years, reflects:

He was president and I used to come after work and do deliveries. Kevin told me: “That’s only part of it. You talk to the people. They might need more than food. Never intrude but look for openings”. I’ve kept this in mind over the years. Each person is important. Such a valuable insight, his questioning What more can we do to help these people? His conviction to always do more. Thank you Kevin.

### **Record of service Kevin Jones**

<b>1966</b>	Foundation member, Montmorency Conference
<b>1968</b>	Member, Horsham Conference
<b>1970</b>	Member, Stawell Conference
<b>1973</b>	Resumed as Member, Horsham Conference
<b>1978-2020</b>	Member, Traralgon Conference
<b>2006-2020</b>	President, Latrobe Baw Baw Regional Council

# NOTHING STOPS THE SOUP VANS

## HOW COLLINGWOOD AND FITZROY ADAPTED DURING COVID

### **Dedicated to the memory of Leo Holt**

**When Covid hit in early 2020, a sense of certainty for Victorians was one of the first casualties. The Society understood that the impact would be most keenly felt by those with the fewest buffers and the greatest vulnerabilities. Many most affected rely on the soup vans for food and human connection. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the soup vans not only continued but prevailed, providing more than double the normal number of meals and even starting one new delivery program.**

As news of the virus's arrival in Melbourne was circulating, Vinnies soup van members were quickly working out how they could continue. So much of the normal approach had to be abandoned: no street stops to avoid people congregating; no direct handling of food. That meant the normal making of soup, serving other hot food and holding weekly barbeques would cease. No door-to-door visits in public housing towers; only two people per van in order to meet social distancing requirements.

Mary Gardiner, Collingwood Soup Van President and Melissa Walton, Victorian Soup Van President, oversaw the mammoth task of shifting to a new, Covid-safe way of operating across these two soup van operations.

**The messages coming from Head Office, echoing Government Health warnings, were sobering and cautionary. No risks to be taken; adhere to social distancing; hand hygiene of utmost importance; protect our older citizens. Subsequently, many older volunteers took leave of absence or retired.**

The first decision made was to pool resources of these two closely located operations. As Melissa explains:

*Fitzroy's headquarters at Jean McKendry Centre were really ideal. We took over the whole building during Covid. It became the North Melbourne Soup Van Hub and now includes a mini supermarket.*

Both Mary and Melissa recall after the last normal service on Sunday, March 29, 2020, both van operations moved to delivering hampers directly to people's accommodation on either a weekly or fortnightly basis. They also started delivering meals being made in the Victorian Parliament kitchen. Food charities, such as FairShare, were also turning rescued food into single serves of popular meals.

On that Sunday, Collingwood Soup Van surveyed all the people they serve and 49 families said they still needed assistance. On average, Collingwood have been doing 210 hampers every week since then. Names kept being added to the list, many referrals coming from the Call Centre and Collingwood Assistance Centre. People would also spot the van and ask for help.

*In those first few weeks, we were asking for food donations – people were bringing food to North Melbourne. We started developing the best process for making and packing hampers. We didn't miss a day of delivering food.*

Initially, it was very difficult for the people the soup vans assist, as many services shut down quickly. At that point, rough sleepers were still living on the street; many were confused about what was going on. By July, the temporary accommodation in motels was being arranged.



*People thrive on  
having a common  
purpose.*

Mary Gardiner (above) and Melissa Walton



*During Covid, we  
didn't miss a day of  
delivering food.*

*Once we had an address for people, we were able to deliver food to them on a weekly basis.*

For those not in motels, the vans provided special rough-sleeper packs which were more suited for people with limited or no cooking facilities. The packs include cans of tuna, baked beans, cereal, muesli bars, water, fruit and a sandwich. The vans continue to deliver these to anyone they see, usually about 700 packs per week.

Volunteer numbers were down by 40% as people thought about their health concerns, and the changed times for packing and delivering worked against some people's availability. Importantly, there needed to be fewer people in circulation. Even with this reduction, the vans delivered a staggeringly high 800 household hampers per week.

**The soup vans have a highly visible street presence which gives no hint of the massive behind-the-scenes logistics that occur before the vans hit the streets: Preparing rosters; receiving and unpacking deliveries of food; picking up and transferring other food; packing hampers and food packs: packing away deliveries; doing deliveries; liaising with suppliers and donors; and, importantly, looking out for each other in the teams.**

The combined two vans were very fortunate to have Mary Gardiner and Melissa Walton at the helm to deal with the challenges of Covid.

Mary has been involved with Collingwood Soup Van for six years and has done quite a bit of volunteering in the area and for social justice causes. Mary is a nurse and describes her key strength as engaging well with people. There are clearly many other talents.

*Leo Holt was still president then of the Collingwood soup van. I'm a bit of an organiser and quite enjoy the operational side of things. In 2019, I became the President.*

Melissa Walton joined the Fitzroy Soup Van in 2018. Melissa travels over an hour each way to be at North Melbourne and, like Mary, they are spending most of their week there. Melissa's skills were identified early – she has held a senior role leading finance, logistics and information technology teams. In February 2020, she had become Fitzroy Soup Van Vice President and in October, Soup Van State Vice President supporting Leo Holt. She was appointed as State President after Leo passed away. Both women have strong work ethics and bountiful care and compassion for others.



Clarissa Watson from Unsplash





Chris McLay from Unsplash

### **Extending their geographical reach**

In early 2020, from not having many people to serve, the numbers escalated to include delivering to all the public housing buildings in Melbourne and hotels in the city – hundreds of bags of food into the CBD. At their peak in July 2021, they were delivering 800 hampers across the city, Richmond, Collingwood as far as Brunswick and Ascot Vale on one side, and down to St Kilda.

### **Better health and wellbeing outcomes**

One of the positive changes that came out of the new approach has been the increased quality and stronger focus on offering nutritional food. While people loved the usual offerings such as pies and sausage rolls, being able to give people a bag of food with fresh fruit and vegetables, pasta and other staples, tins of lentils and corn, has improved nutrition, independence and dignity.

*Rather than having to come out on the streets, we delivered to them where they live. People can make their own choices – and healthy ones – about how they will use this food over the week. People have the opportunity to*

*think about and do some meal planning. This is definitely a plus.*

**Collingwood Van became aware of the number of people attending Melbourne’s Safe Injecting Facility, from all over Melbourne. Many needed assistance with food. A young volunteer who has been integral to the project started a delivery service there. For the last 15 months, the vannies have been going there six mornings a week, delivering fruit, sandwiches and sweet treats. The facility reports this has helped about 200 people per day, and they are seeing a very good improvement in people’s health.**

At the beginning, it was a jolt to people used to the time shared with vannies, the chats and lengthier interaction. The necessary move to fewer volunteers and delivering in daytime, which was deemed safer, was a big adjustment, but one that has been generally well received. Relationships have endured.

*Over this past 18 months, we have had the same volunteers delivering to the same people so a rapport has been developed – some with already familiar faces and some new.*

## **Praise for the volunteers**

In the year prior to Covid, Collingwood and Fitzroy were providing approximately 160,000 meals. In the last 12 months, during Covid, both operations provided over 370,000 meals. This has been achieved with only 60% of usual volunteer numbers. Mary and Melissa express their respect and gratitude for donors and their volunteers.

**Every week, across all soup van operations, ten tonnes of food is distributed. More than half of this is fresh fruit and vegetables.**

*This food comes mainly from valued partners and donors. Their support makes all this possible.*

*We lost many volunteers who have mainstream day jobs and can only volunteer at night.*

*Fortunately, the vans attract a cross-section of ages. Younger people, many uni students unable to*

*attend classes, some so invested in others' needs, they deferred their studies for the year; other people with time on their hands, even people receiving JobKeeper, stepped in to fill this gap. It has been very inspiring.*

*Many conferences closed down over Covid and the volunteers filled whatever gaps arose. We wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did without them. We had people who had lost their jobs coming to help. Certainly, people were anxious about the future, but they were here, cheerful and happy and ready to help in any way. It gave many people a strong sense of purpose.*

The skills the volunteers bring are incredible and varied: logistics skills, organising, engaging with people, doing Excel spreadsheets, so many contributions, an ever-ready willingness.



*You can ring our volunteers at 3pm and they'll be back happily at 5 to do another shift if required.*

Mary tells the volunteers: every little job they do is a vital cog in the wheel that makes for smooth running and a great service to the people who rely on them. Packing a rough-sleeper hamper, making a sandwich, driving a van, packing masks, each thing matters. The volunteers know they will receive so much in return too.

*As a soup van volunteer, you will meet people you would never normally meet – both volunteers and the people we serve – it takes you out of your regular life. The inspiration and fun from being around these people, you will not get anywhere else. The vans bring people together and build friendship. A testament to the valuable experience is to recognise the firm friendships among many vannies.*

### **Ongoing challenges**

There are now many people back on the streets, not necessarily all sleeping rough, but at risk of homelessness and who have other issues, such as inter-generational poverty, family breakdown and mental health. Fortunately, the mental health service system is improving.

Food security remains high in the hierarchy of needs and so is the need for social interaction.

The North Melbourne Soup Van Hub recognises it cannot go back to what it used to do; certainly not before there is a very high vaccination rate. The Hub model is a good one with lots of opportunities to explore.

The combined Collingwood/Fitzroy soup vans have, in effect, reverted to the original intention of Fitzroy's first van, which was started by uni students who initially went looking for anyone needing a meal, only much later incorporating street stops.

**The soup van lives out the Ozanam story of responding to people's needs in nineteenth century Paris. Volunteers don't have to be Catholic or religious. As**

**Melissa and Mary see it, the immediacy of responding to need always seems to attract the right kind of volunteers.**

*You don't have to be of faith; everyone finds their own 'church' and, for many of us, this is our church. This is what we do and this is what we belong to.*

It is fitting that the last words are those of Leo Holt. Leo was a Collingwood Soup Van volunteer for 22 years and served as Soup Van President for 5 years. Four months before his passing, he wrote a letter congratulating the volunteers on their efforts and dedication during Covid. This is an excerpt.

*The belting that Soup Vans have taken from Covid made us initially question how we could remain relevant to the provision of services for many of the most disadvantaged people in the community.*

*The contactless responses that have developed over the last few months of lockdown have been truly phenomenal. The dedicated input by volunteers and the Soup Van team has allowed us to reach out to so many in need.*

*Proud as ever to be a Soup Van member.*

*Best regards,*

*Leo*

### **Record of service Collingwood/Fitzroy Soup Vans**

#### **Mary Gardiner**

**2015-** Volunteer, Collingwood Soup Van

**2018-2019** Vice President,  
Collingwood Soup Van

**2019-** President, Collingwood Soup Van

#### **Melissa Walton**

**2018-** Volunteer, Fitzroy Soup Van

**2020-2021** Vice President, Fitzroy Soup Van

**2021-** President (Acting),  
Fitzroy Soup Van

**2020** Vice President,  
Victorian Soup Vans

**2021-** President, Victorian Soup Vans



*We're here to work until we can't work anymore!*

# KATHLEEN LEGGETT

## A BIG HEART IN A SMALL SHOP

Kathleen Leggett's family have lived in Ararat for generations. Her talk of the town reinforces her attachment to it and knowledge of its people and circumstances. In her lifetime, Kathleen has seen it grow from a small community to a population of 7,000.

After leaving school after Year 9, working as a telephonist at the PMG Exchange and the local Advertiser before marrying and having two children, Kathleen wanted to do something for herself and for others. This drew her to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Members of the conference had started collecting clothes that were stored at the former primary school. In 1981, the conference recognised they needed a more permanent home. Kathleen remembers the men called on the real estate agent inquiring about commercial property available for sale. The conference ended up buying the real estate office — and they have been there ever since. It is a small building, with two front entrances. One part of the store has an office where members give assistance to people in need.

### **Starting in the shop**

In their thirties, Kathleen and two friends, Jan and Jenny, started working in the shop; Jan was the manager. A few years later when women were allowed to become members, the three women became the first female members of Ararat Conference. Today, the conference has nine members, five of whom are women. These members cover the rosters, along with about twenty volunteers. Some are participants in Work for the Dole and are mainly in their thirties and forties; the rest of the team are in their sixties or older. Duties can change to accommodate skills and ability, and most stay for years.

Kathleen understands the town's ebbs and flows: pension week is usually good for her Vinnies shop sales, off pension not so good. Covid has been a very challenging time on many fronts. Tough times always hit hardest those with the fewest safeguards. Regional house prices have gone through the roof: a modest Ararat house could once be bought for \$300,000, now the price hovers around \$500,000. It's good for some, very hard for others. People struggle and Kathleen knows the plight of many.

The town doesn't see the 'track travellers' – itinerants – it used to see, but there are people from overseas such as Pacific Islanders who come to work at the abattoir, an electronics company or perhaps to find casual farm-hand jobs. Kathleen sees what these people add to the town, becoming involved in the community through their faith groups, schools, the CFA and the fire brigade. It pleases her when they find permanent work and are able to buy a house.

### **Becoming manager**

In 1991, Kathleen took over as store manager. Running a Vinnies shop well requires great people skills, awareness of risks and safety issues, visual merchandising flair and managing the finances.

Kathleen is very committed to running a well organised shop – she chuckles at her need for clothes all facing the same way, both at home and in the shop. She provides an environment where her team enjoy coming to work, have a sense of purpose and enjoy making sales. She is savvy at setting prices. The shop's biggest sales ever were \$1,000 for a bench, table and dresser set, and the same amount for a massage chair.

Equally important is remembering that the stores do fundamentally support people. Kathleen and her team are always attentive to people's needs.



Noah Zsyo from Unsplash

***Recently a man came in, took his shoes off and put on a pair of ours. His own were coming apart. He asked if he could pay for them in weekly instalments. I was able to use a voucher to cover the cost. He was grinning like he'd won the lottery.***

Kathleen knows what her customers like too. She has one man, a recent arrival to Australia, who is very fond of jackets. He has bought a few from the shop.

People know they can come to the shop for assistance or the welfare line refers them. The conference also participates as part of a five-weekly roster, taking turns with the Anglican Church, the Uniting Church, Church of Christ and the Salvation Army to provide emergency relief such as food and vouchers for petrol or the supermarket.

The conference covers Ararat and surrounding townships, such as Willaura, Lake Bolac and Elmhurst. People are comfortable coming to the store for assistance when they visit Ararat. In earlier times, the conference also did home visits. Some memories have stayed with Kathleen.

***There was a sad pile of old vegetables on this lady's kitchen bench. We could see she was a lovely person but was struggling. We showed her how to***

***make soup. A few weeks later she and her little girl came to the shop. The little girl said: "I love my mum's soup, but can you teach her to make something else? That's all we're eating." We gave the little girl a Home Economics cook book to take home. That little girl is now a mum herself and often comes into the shop.***

### **Covid**

Over 2020-2021, the conference lost some older members to Covid-induced attrition. Kathleen understands the anxiety many older people felt, but she found it hard to accept the edict delivered early in the pandemic that older members stop active involvement. Kathleen is a woman who is not defined by age.

Regional Victoria, while not as hard hit with lockdowns as Greater Melbourne, has still borne the brunt with frequent lockdowns. Even coming out of these quicker than Melbourne, it has been an unrelenting grind of opening, closing and re-opening, often in fairly quick succession. The team have become accustomed to Head Office notifying them to prepare to close. They have procedures they put in place swiftly; valuables



Alex Motoc from Unsplash

go in the safe, signs are put out notifying the public of closure.

There are genuine consequences from lockdown fatigue but Kathleen and her team have become adept at quickly adapting. She is well respected by the retail team for her determination to keep the shop open. She recognised the importance of maintaining a revenue stream but, equally, wanted to protect the wellbeing of her volunteers by maintaining a safe place and purpose for them.

***This last lockdown [6 August–10 September] it's been tough. It was a snap announcement. Even now we're back, less people come in. Home schooling is taking its toll. Some days we have only taken \$100.***

The store used to have a charity bin, which they closed during Covid. In the first lockdowns, many people were cleaning out their houses and lots of goods were brought to stores. In adherence to health regulations, goods were left for a few days before Kathleen and her team handled them. Kathleen has done a great deal of education around the town to stop people leaving goods outside the shop and it's been quite effective.

The conference was able to continue distributing

emergency relief during Covid in a contactless way. At first, members took the calls from their homes rather than coming to the shop's office. People's needs were assessed over the phone and they were then able to collect their parcel or, if no transport, two members did a contactless delivery. As lockdowns continued, procedures have adapted, with two members wearing masks now going to the office to respond and leave the items for contactless collection.

Vinnies conferences and stores all have their own vibe. Ararat's projects a warm sense of family, care and fairness. Kathleen looks after her team. In return, people will fill in at short notice if required and everyone contributes what they're good at.

***We have all developed a feel for the shop. We have strong friendships — some go back a long way. They're a really good bunch. If you need anything, they'll always help. We're here to work until we can't work anymore!***

This is possibly due to the qualities people remark upon in relation to the store's culture and Kathleen's contribution. Kathleen sees it as simply going with the flow and trying to get along with everyone. Others testify to Kathleen's care and prioritising of her team. Ararat's Vinnies store is known as a small shop with a big heart. Kathleen has a kind and gentle demeanour, which covers a steely resolve to work hard, and a lovely sense of humour.

Things have changed since those early days of the all-men conference. Kathleen has seen her town develop. The conference is now equal parts men and women. Through all the changes, Kathleen continues to live by a simple formula of work hard and do some good.

***I always said I'd like to reach 40 year of services at the shop. As long as I can, I'll keep going.***

### **Record of service Kathleen Leggett**

**1982-** Volunteer, Ararat Store

**1983-** Member, Ararat Conference

# CASEY YOUNG VINNIES:

## THRIVING ON CONNECTION AND UP FOR ANY CHALLENGES

Young Vinnies as a whole are a very passionate and committed group of members and volunteers. Perhaps this is why there were several nominations received for members of the Casey Young Vinnies. In the end, a decision was made to honour the work of the conference as a whole. Casey Young Vinnies is a thriving conference with over sixty members, aged between 18 and 35, with a fairly even gender split. This is important, as many of the children they see are seeking positive male role models.

The chance to meet with a group of these members was thwarted many times due to Covid lockdowns. Eventually, and in the spirit of the times, an online meeting was convened.

President, Arnhie San Juan, Vice President, Sarah Duncan, Treasurer, Michael Prasetyo, and member, Sarah Castricum, joined the interview to give a representative picture of CYV's experiences of working with children.

Being with four Gen Zs (those born between 1995 and 2015) – even via Zoom – is a joyous, positive experience. These Young Vinnies volunteers exude many recognizable traits of their generation. They are entrepreneurial, embracing of difference, very technologically savvy, socially connected and socially responsible, crave high engagement and new experiences. They exemplify why the Society values their involvement.

These four representatives demonstrate strong social justice leanings and a desire to be involved. Their school and early uni days contained volunteering and, for Sarah Castricum, participation in the *Footsteps of Frederic program*.

Around the end of 2016 and the start of 2017, member motivation and numbers were flagging. CYVs was fortunate to find people keen to be part

of the next chapter. Arnhie was one who was ready to dive in and assume leadership roles.

There are many benefits, not only for the children being helped but also for the members. Some are born leaders, others have overcome shyness and social anxiety to develop confidence and communication skills. Many find untapped potential for leadership they hadn't realised was in them.

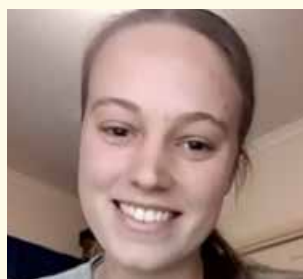
There are cross benefits too between careers and Vinnies involvement; each enhances the other. Arnhie coordinates a call centre involved in fundraising for scholarships and life-saving research, and Michael is an accountant; very valuable skills in both spheres. Sarah Duncan works in local council in a community engagement role, with specific focus on young families in a growth corridor; and Sarah Castricum is training to become a physiotherapist.

The conference is also a wonderful way to connect socially and there are many strong friendships formed. Social events are held regularly to keep engagement high. Arnhie and Sarah recognize this generation can lose interest fast if not actively connected to each other and able to keep momentum going.

The way Arnhie, Michael and both Sarahs explain why they are members, all four were drawn to the Young Vinnies by a strong need to be involved in something meaningful.

One of the attractions of joining a Young Vinnies conference is to shape what each one offers. No two Young Vinnies conferences are the same. Another benefit is being exposed to all facets of conference work. Members participate on the soup van, do home visits, help with the education program and generally lend a hand where they can. They receive a grounded understanding of the





From left: Arnhie San Juan, Michael Prasetyo, Sarah Castricum and Sarah Duncan

## *Casey Young Vinnies help young people develop resilience as well as generous and caring spirits.*



Rusty Watson from Unsplash

lifecycle of disadvantage and the opportunities to make a difference at various points in a person's life.

### **Kids Days Out**

Casey's main program is Kids Days Out (KDOs), normally held six times per year, with separate groups for young children and teenagers. These events utilise members' creative talents in planning and executing memorable days. Frequently, feedback from the young people who attend these indicates they have been some of the best experiences in their lives.

In normal circumstances, Casey Young Vinnies hold these events every two months and many young people – both participants and volunteers – will continue to attend many of them. The ongoing nature enables building of rapport and relationships. There is a strong sense of connection: the children and their families know the Young Vinnies are

there for them and they are able to make contact between KDOs.

The children are taken on an excursion or a team-building activity. The Young Vinnies act as mentors and guides. While the activities are fun, at its core, the leaders are helping provide the children with skills to deal with emotional and challenging issues in their lives. These days are designed to build their social and interpersonal skills. It is a chance to make friends with others who will understand what they are experiencing. It also provides respite to the parents – and the child – as often it is a break from what might be challenges at home. Importantly, it is time to enjoy being a child, with group activities and one-on-one time.

***We build relationships with the children and their parents. They get to know us, they identify with us as Vinnies. The kids connect and are very open***



John Cameron from Unsplash

*to re-connecting every time. They are usually full of news to share with us – what’s happening at school, what they received for their birthday – they talk our ears off and we love this. They also know they can talk to us anytime out of these days. This is an important part of the program.*

Child safe considerations are paramount and there is mandatory training to ensure all members and volunteers are fully fluent in understanding boundaries. Volunteers receive first aid training, both for general health but also, importantly, mental health. This provides a solid foundation for the kind of conversations and disclosures that can occur as the children become comfortable with the volunteers.

All four Young Vinnies recounted favourite moments shared with children with whom they developed rapport. One child approaching the cut-off age for participating asked if she could come back as a volunteer. These Young Vinnies recognize they are contributing something valuable that helps young people develop resilience as well as generous and caring spirits. The chance for the cycle to continue is a message of hope.

## **Covid**

These Young Vinnies could have been blind-sided by Covid as there wasn't a model they could turn to, to help them transition from face-to-face to online mode. They worked together to overcome the challenges.

*We started a newsletter during Covid as a way of staying connected. The kids told us what they were doing at home: craft, baking, science experiments. Pet profiles, colouring-in competition, all were ways to stay connected with us and interact. The kids sent in photos and stories which we published in the newsletter.*

*We also started doing special deliveries: for example, Mother’s Day gifts and Easter eggs. We sourced donations from Vinnies and packed them when restrictions were eased. Everyone helped.*

The Society's education program offering tutoring and an after-school homework club was able to transition to online. Many Casey volunteers remained involved in this or started their tutoring journey for the first time.

One unique activity for this group is their Christmas Appeal. Last year, one volunteer, Priskila, came up with the idea to do an online raffle, which was supported by families, friends and co-workers. They drew the winners on Facebook Live and raised over \$6,500. The members are hopeful they will be able to do their usual Christmas hampers this year.

The members worry about the impact Covid has had on their families and their fellow volunteers. Learning from home has been challenging and many families, particularly single parents with several children, really struggled. It has taken its toll and they have seen a drop in some children's social skills.

Michael sums up the sense of loss:

*The sense of disconnect, being away from the families and the children. I wonder how they are going. And our other involvements such as soup van. I miss them.*

The team share what they have learned about this new reality. They recognise the need to build skills to best adapt to this new setting. Some volunteers have dropped away and are not attending socials. Re-connecting can be hard when there is disengagement, but the team continues to reach out and keep offering bonding opportunities.

*Covid is a very long-term challenge, so it is important we think long term.*

*Online platforms can offer better engagement with the families and a way to build and maintain rapport.*

*One-to-ones will be important when we start KDOs. We will have to think about the best approach. Kids may be quite anxious and introverted. Encouragement is important. Not all kids have engaged successfully with school over Covid.*

The Society is canny to encourage the energy and leadership of passionate groups of young people with strong social justice leaning like these. The benefits permeate through the broader organization. These younger members are the ones most comfortable with constantly adapting, who can achieve positive, long-term, generational change. This can reap rewards for the people we assist and for the long-term sustainability of our organisation. Keep it coming, Young Vinnies.



# FRANK WINKELMANN

## SHOWING BY DOING

Early influences and ways of doing are always part of who we are and how we operate. A commitment to service has been a constant thread in the life of Beaumaris/Black Rock Conference member, Frank Winkelmann. The simple statement, "I like to help people" that Frank often says, sums it up succinctly.

Frank grew up in the Black Forest region of Germany, in a family of strong faith. Even as a child, Frank remembers enjoying helping people, especially older people. The stories of Don Bosco and St Thomas More, great men of their word, who lived out their faiths with honesty and courage, remain vivid to Frank. Becoming a priest was contemplated, but Frank knew he was more a 'doer' than a 'reflector'.

Frank studied Economics for a few years and it has been a useful add-on, but realised he lacked the necessary passion to continue. Liking to help people was why he changed to hotel management.

Frank obtained a diploma from the highly regarded Swiss Hotel Management School. It was here he gained experience of being in a training environment with people from different nationalities and backgrounds. His ease with being around people and working well in a team are some things he is well known for. The rigour of the training further developed his capacity to read and respond to a person's needs. It could be stressful serving the demands of paying guests, but he revelled in meeting their needs to the best of his ability. He perfected the art of knowing what people want and delivering it promptly and effectively. His recollections of this time include colourful accounts that reveal his enjoyment of people, the important role of humour and strong organisational flair that have continued to benefit all he does.

Retiring after 35 years, Frank wanted to do something useful. He is an energetic promoter

of the value of work, how it enriches our lives, our relationship with God and for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

He started doing various voluntary work: delivering meals on wheels with his Council, providing companionship to isolated people and as a 'Meet and Greet' volunteer at Cabrini Hospital, directing patients to the many doctors' suites. Some of these roles continue today.

Twelve years ago, Frank read in the parish bulletin that the St Vincent de Paul Society was seeking new members.

Frank smiles recalling the first meeting where the conference was delighted to invite a 'young' person into their midst. Frank touches on the ageing of the membership from time to time: it is an ever-present reality across all conferences.

The conference has changed. Many older members have retired or passed away. In 2017, A Call to Serve honoured a former State President Jim Grealish, now deceased, and wife Judith, who both did much for the Society

*I've been Secretary for the last six years. We have a very good new president in Vicki Curtain and I very much enjoy my visits with Jeanne Tyssen and occasionally other women in the conference.*

*When I see how people react to our visits, they are pleased to talk. Of course, they need assistance, but we can also help just by having contact or suggesting how they can arrange their bills to get the best deal. People lighten up then.*

*Being a small conference of seven members, we have closer contact with the people we visit. They get to know us. A very nice relationship forms, which I like. They appreciate it and it is fulfilling for me too.*



*Bring humility  
and leave  
judgement  
behind.*



The Beaumaris/Black Rock Conference is located within what is now known as Bayside Catholic Mission, following the amalgamation of parishes by the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese. This Mission incorporates the communities of St. James, Brighton, St Joan of Arc Brighton, St. Mary's Hampton, Sacred Heart, Sandringham, St. Joseph's Black Rock and Stella Maris Beaumaris. The Stella Maris school and its parish community are supporters of St Vincent de Paul Society, providing Christmas hampers for the soup van and responding to Winter Appeals.

It is not an area people would associate with great need or disadvantage. Property prices work against many low-income people living here, but there are always pockets of need to be found even in what might first appear to be unlikely places. The area has some public housing and specialist, supported housing, but, equally, loneliness, grief and mental health issues can touch people regardless of socio-economic circumstances. There may not be that many calls these days, but it is quality not quantity that reflects true serving.

This is where Frank's combined personal attributes and skills come to the fore. His Conference colleagues Vicki Curtain and Jeanne Tyssen praise Frank's contribution, demonstrating his faithful adherence to the Society's Mission and Values and how attuned he is to each person.

He is known to always go above and beyond expectations, while dealing with all with humour and respect for dignity. He is an exemplary Conference Secretary. He welcomes and trains new applicants into the Society, always showing home visitation in the learning by doing approach which was a feature of the Swiss Hotel Management training.

President Vicki recalls a home visit requesting vouchers. A lady was living in a small unit with her son. Frank noticed the lack of warmth and light in her home and realised she did not know how to change light bulbs. He fetched blankets from the Winter Appeal and picked up some light bulbs from his house, returning to show her how to change them with the different fittings.

Another time, they visited a Spanish-speaking lady. Frank recognised it was not so much material aid that she needed. She was lonely and isolated by her lack of English. Frank organised a translator who put her in touch with the local Spanish-speaking community.

Frank believes his career trained him to be alert and attentive as a good hotel employee would always be. He is always present to respond to each person individually and to the best of his ability. His fellow members attest to this. He is the first person on the Conference's email list, responding to most of the calls. He inducts new members, taking time to explain guidelines. He has endless patience.

Knowing when to linger and when to go is another skill that Frank is acknowledged as having down to a fine art. Frank discerns when a person wants the members to stay and chat and, equally, when the delivery is done, to leave promptly. It is again part of his respectful and compassionate regard for a person's dignity and privacy.

Frank is aware he has time to give that other members may devote to family commitments, and he can be flexible. This allows him to respond quickly. Nothing is ever too much of a challenge.

When pared down to its most basic and deconstructed form, the role of a conference member is both straightforward and yet nuanced. Frank seems to be able to handle each part of the role with both sensitivity and ease.

### **Covid**

*All of a sudden with Covid, a new situation for all of us. Vicki uses Zoom in her work, so she set it up for us to have our meetings, which was excellent. There were a few little hiccups and eventually we all got the hang of it. Of course, the pandemic has gone on and on, longer than any of us predicted. It feels like we're becoming experts in this.*

*There's been occasional reprieve where we go back to live meetings at the church before Sunday mass and seeing people at their*



Nick Fewings from Unsplash

*doorsteps, but not going into houses. We have grown accustomed to the new situation and the changes we have made work very well.*

Frank was surprised at first that the conference didn't get more calls during the worrying time of Covid, but puts this down to many people they assist receiving more from the government.

We thought there would be a rush, particularly of new people, but things actually died down.

*We are now almost back to normal levels of requests. We saw some people that had been moved into government housing, but they didn't stay very long; it felt like a temporary arrangement.*

### **Lightening a person's load**

Members don't know the back story in people's lives unless they want to share it, so they often don't know what forces or personal issues have

contributed to a person's circumstances. As Frank sees it, we are there to ease their load in whatever way we can.

Frank is attuned to how a person is coping. He listens attentively and knows some lightness can help. His fellow members also appreciate the fun they have in his company.

Across various volunteering activities, he enjoys injecting some humour, knowing people might be anxious. A former member tells of Frank doing cartwheels in the courtyard when visiting residents in supported accommodation. This brought a smile to many faces.

### **The Founding Story**

Frank believes it is an extension to his faith being a volunteer, and this includes helping around the church if there are jobs he can assist with. Working in hospitality meant weekends were

always busy and he now enjoys having time to do anything that needs to be done: collection and counting, being an Extraordinary Minister. It helps the parish and is done promptly and efficiently. The description often used to describe Thomas More, 'A Man for All Seasons', is a catchword Frank uses. He is indeed a man for all situations

Frank has read about Blessed Frederic Ozanam and encourages new members to acquaint themselves with his teachings.

*Ozanam's spirit and the circumstances of his time, the misery, it is an incredible story of young people wanting to help in horrific times.*

On a trip to Paris, he visited the graves of both St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam. He was fortunate that a student offered to show him Ozanam's grave on a day when the building was closed.

*We went through many doors to finally arrive at his resting place. I feel very blessed to have had this experience. I left filled with energy.*

Vincentians often speak of the pride of being linked in some small way to the Founding Story, regardless of whether they have visited these sacred sites. The Founding Story speaks for itself, as Frank points out. It can ignite a desire to be part of this incredible

history of care, companionship, love and service. Recruiting new members, especially young ones is still a challenge, though. Frank understands there are many competing priorities for young people and people with families.

### **The future for the Conference**

The Conference hopes the new parish structure of Bayside Mission might help in recruiting some newer members, because it provides a larger base.

*I would say to anyone wanting to volunteer: If you like to help and assist others, St Vincent de Paul is a good cause and has an inspiring foundational story. And you don't have to be Catholic! Bring humility and leave judgement behind. Don't delay! Do it now.*

#### **Record of service Frank Winkelmann**

**2008-2020** Member, Black Rock/  
Beaumaris Conference

**2016-2020** Secretary, Black Rock/  
Beaumaris Conference

**2020** Associate Member,  
Black Rock/Beaumaris Conference



Matt Seymour from Unsplash





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St Vincent de Paul Society  
VICTORIA

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