



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Impact

The difference
you make

AUTUMN 2024
ISSUE 16

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white textured sweater, smiling warmly at a baby she is holding. The baby is wearing a light blue sweater and has a pink flower in its hair. They are outdoors, with green foliage in the background.

SUPPORT FOR A FAMILY WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

FEATURES REFUGE OPENS TO SUPPORT WOMEN
A REHABILITATION STORY OF RESILIENCE
HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPACT OF TEXTILE WASTE

VINNIES
RENEWS
REBUILDS
RESTORES

Welcome



The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is seeing a significant increase in demand on its services as we see the cost of living pressures continue to impact far too many people.

This presents both a challenge and a responsibility that we could not rise to without the support of people like you.

I am so thankful for the generosity you show as a supporter of our services. It is humbling to know that in the face of continued demand, you recognise the value of our work and the impact it makes in the lives of thousands of people each year.

When I think about the impact your donation makes to the lives of the people we assist, I

am reminded of a story shared by a mother in the lead up to Christmas.

"Having help takes a lot of bricks off the shoulders. The bricks, one by one, have come off and for a bit, I'm just taking a deep breath."

These words sum up the feeling that so many have come to know in recent times of being weighed down by the pressure of trying to keep their heads above water. These words also speak to the assistance that the Society is able to offer – assistance that is made possible thanks to your generous support.

As the demand for assistance continues, rest assured that your support allows us to support more people.

Yolanda Saiz
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

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Because we respect the privacy of the people we assist, names in this newsletter may have been changed, stories summarised and pictorial models used.

For more information about the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, contact:
(02) 9568 0262 or vinnies.org.au. Correspondence can be sent to media.nsw@vinnies.org.au.

Follow
us on:



Messages of thanks

VINNIES IS THERE TO HELP WHEN PEOPLE GO THROUGH TIMES OF TROUBLE. HEAR FROM SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOW BACK ON THEIR FEET THANKS TO YOUR GENEROSITY.

Vinnies is – for me – the biggest gift in the world and I just don't know where I'd be without them. – Audrey

Thanks to Vinnies, my family's all together, we're all still standing, and no-one's going hungry. – Barbara

In the last lot of sickness – I wasn't sure if I was going to make it. Vinnies staff visited me in hospital and kept my spirits high – that was very special to me. – Patrick

I know that I will never have to reach rock-bottom again. I know Vinnies will be there for me. – Albert

The team at St Vincent de Paul are fantastic. They make you feel just like part of the family – they're angels. – Cynthia

How far your support goes

YOUR SUPPORT ALLOWS US TO TRANSFORM LIVES FOR THE BETTER EVERY DAY.

Thank you for your generosity and support which enabled our members, volunteers and employees to make a difference in communities across the state over the past year.



87,000 people assisted with food, clothing, household items, cost of living expenses and emotional support



70,000 instances of assistance provide by our network of Vinnies Vans



8,672 people supported through our Homelessness and Housing services



17,700 people accessed a range of Disability and Inclusion programs and services



1,314 people received treatment from our Health services

Learn more about the impact of our work by **scanning the QR code** to see our latest St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Annual Report



When life stands still but the world stays the same

RACHEL WAS TWO WEEKS AWAY FROM GIVING BIRTH WHEN HER WORLD WAS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

As she waited with anticipation for the imminent arrival of her second child, she received harrowing news that her husband, Tony, had been seriously injured in a car accident.

In that moment, Rachel's life stood still. However, the demands of the world stayed the same.

As she tried to manage looking after her newborn daughter, Ivy, young son with autism, Max, and incapacitated husband, the mounting pressure of attending medical appointments and keeping up with rising cost of living expenses – all while being unable to work – took a toll.

"I didn't really ask anyone for help. I didn't really know what to do," says Rachel.

"I was doing a lot of travelling trying to get to the hospital as much as I could... not sleeping very much... not getting much done around the house."

Fortunately, Rachel's circumstances changed when she came into contact with a St Vincent de Paul Society NSW member named Margie.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW assisted more than 87,000 people in their time of need over the past year through our statewide network of members.

Margie is one of many members who give of themselves to make Vinnies more than a charity.

"There are a lot of hidden people that are struggling, and they remain hidden and in need of a lot of help," explains Margie.

Members like Margie offer a human touch that goes beyond a food hamper or supermarket voucher. They understand the circumstances of each person they encounter and act to meet individual needs. Our members understand that there's no one size fits all approach – it is through taking the time to get to know someone that they can help to bring about change for the better.

"There are all sorts of ways we can help people. The best thing that we give is love and care."





It's through this approach that Vinnies has been able to assist Rachel in a variety of ways, including support with electricity bills, accessing dental care and organising local workers to help her move into a new home after the family's lease ended.

One of the most impactful displays of support came during the first Christmas after Tony's accident where Margie lived out the spirit of the festive season with a delivery of gifts for Max that left a lasting impression.

"He remembers the day that she came with the presents," says Rachel.

"It was a significant moment. He was so tiny as well, but he'll never forget. Because there had been so much trauma, and then to have someone just show up with a little sack of toys was just a magical moment – it was really wonderful."

The support provided by Vinnies has offered Rachel greater stability and a support system she can turn to during times of hardship.

"Our rent here has just been going up and up and up and up. It went up by \$50, so that's another \$100 a fortnight. Plus, you've got petrol,

things like that. It's just water bills, electricity, so everything, you name it."

Thankfully, Margie and Vinnies will be there to support Rachel and others in similar situations in times of need.

"She knows that she can ring me up anytime she wants to have a cry on my shoulder. I think that's just wonderful that I can help people that way," says Margie.

Rachel is one of the thousands of people the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is able to assist each year thanks to the generosity of supporters like you.

As cost of living and housing pressures intensify in communities across the country, you can rest assured that your contribution is making a difference to people in need of assistance.

As Rachel can pay testament to, "anything that you give will go to the right place."

"Giving to Vinnies is giving to those in the community, because when you are in trouble, that's where you go."

**VINNIES
RENEWS**

If you haven't already made a donation to the Vinnies Autumn Appeal, please give so that vulnerable people, including families like Rachel's can look towards the future with hope. Donate online at vinnies.org.au/nswautumnappeal, use the form on the back of this magazine, call 13 18 12 or scan the QR code.



New refuge to meet community need

ON AVERAGE, THREE WOMEN SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM OUR DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES EVERY EIGHT HOURS.

Domestic and family violence was cited as the leading reason for people seeking assistance from our Homelessness and Housing services in the past year.

This chilling statistic speaks to the growing demand for services like Our Lady of the Way – a newly refurbished refuge operated by the St Vincent de Paul Society in Western Sydney that aims to meet the community-wide need for assistance.

Our Lady of the Way was established to provide supported crisis accommodation for single women aged over 55 years. It is a unique service model and is one of the only services in NSW that is specifically targeted for older females who are experiencing homelessness and domestic family violence.

The new refuge features individual units along with communal spaces that allow women to gain safety and rebuild their lives in a supportive environment.

The Society assisted more than 2,200 people through our domestic and family violence services over the past year. This demand for assistance has grown considerably in recent times with the number people our services have assisted since the start of COVID increasing by 42% annually.

While our services endeavour to meet this need with existing resources, the latest Report on Government Services, released by the Productivity Commission in early 2024, highlights the challenges that exist. Findings show close to half of all people seeking accommodation from Specialist Homelessness Services were unable to access support in the past year.

The latest Personal Safety Survey, conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, highlighted the concerning scale of domestic and family violence present throughout the country.



Findings from the survey include one in five adults have experienced family and domestic violence since the age of 15.

For women, the rate is one in four.

The issue has been shown to have lasting impacts on young people with 2.2 million people reportedly witnessing partner violence against their mothers when they were children. The intergenerational transmission of violence that stems from witnessing such trauma can lead to adverse developmental outcomes for children, including an increased likelihood of victims becoming perpetrators of violence later in life.

It is for factors like this that the Society has invested in dedicated support for children residing at our domestic and family violence refuges to help them recover in a safe and child-friendly environment.

As part of our ambition to increase access to impactful services for the most disadvantaged and hard to reach communities, establishing services like Our Lady of the Way enables the Society to ensure more people across the state are able to achieve and sustain housing security.

**VINNIES
REBUILDS**



Jarrood's story of recovery

JARROD IS ONE OF THE MANY PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY FREEMAN HOUSE, A DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICE OPERATED BY THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY IN NORTH-WESTERN NSW.

This is his story of recovery, hope and gratitude for the support that was made possible thanks to supporters like you.

Hello out there to whoever may find this helpful. I'm writing from my new home overlooking the beautiful scenery of Armidale.

My story of recovery, near death and life began last year after an outreach worker from Freeman House encouraged me to seek treatment. I was unwell from drinking to excess, resulting in liver sorosis.

When I started in detox, I didn't last a night and had to be hospitalised. It felt as though I was dying and for a time, I lost the use of my legs from the waist down.

After recovering in hospital, I was able to complete detox and moved into the residential program where I set about regaining my mind and putting into practice what I was taking from the group sessions.

Along with the group sessions where I learnt to make clear focussed decisions, I was able

to make use of facilities such as rooms for art, music, pool and the gym to improve my health and mind.

I got to know a lot about myself through the other residents. We had a wide variety of experiences, levels of trauma and barriers. We had motivations and goals we wanted to achieve in our lives.

I was progressing through the program but continued to be sick. It culminated in a seizure which saw me hospitalised, ultimately leading to a diagnosis of type one diabetes.

The diagnosis was a shock but thanks to specialists who taught me how to deal with this chronic incurable illness, I now inject insulin daily, check my glucose levels and have more energy and am more active than I've been in a long time.

I met so many inspiring people during my time at Freeman – nurses, case workers, support staff and management – all of them brilliant and filled with compassion.

I feel whole again with purpose and meaning – I'm working, have a place of my own, enrolled in an alcohol and other drugs course and have a support system in place.

I'd like to thank St Vincent de Paul and my new friends at Freeman House for helping me to see clearly – I feel whole and happy in harmony with myself.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

When I reflect on how far I've come since being supported by Freeman House, I'm reminded of a moment from when I was in primary school that speaks to who I am. There was a girl with a disability who was treated like an outcast. It would have been easy to go along with everyone else ignoring her. But I chose to sit with her. It was the right thing to do to show that someone cared: "me".

If anyone needs help, reach out to Freeman House. I'm just like you, it is possible to be your true self again. Find the spark and don't look back.

VINNIES
RESTORES

Freeman House performs a vital role in the community as the largest residential rehabilitation service in Northern NSW. With the closest service offering withdrawal facilities located four hours away in Lismore and Newcastle, Freeman House acts as a haven offering long-term drug and alcohol rehabilitation, crisis accommodation, inpatient treatment, aftercare support and programs to accommodate patients with young children.



Members come together to make a mark in Maitland

A NEWLY OPENED HUB IS ENABLING ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY MEMBERS TO MAKE A GREATER IMPACT ACROSS THE LOWER HUNTER OF NSW.

As cost of living and housing pressures extend into a new year, the Society has stepped up to meet the rising demand in an area with some of the highest need in the state.

“We’re talking about people who are employed but they just cannot get food on the table or pay their utility bills. The financial stress that they’re going through is through the roof,” said Clare Van Doorn, St Vincent de Paul Society North East Regional Director.

“Maybe 12 or 18 months ago, [the family budget] might’ve been tight, but that amount of money worked.

“Now, how do you manage when those costs go up?”

In the first half of the financial year, close to 9,500 people sought assistance from our members in the Maitland/Newcastle area with the Lower Hunter accounting for more than 1,100. Concerningly, one-in-three in the Lower Hunter sought assistance for the first time and two-in-three reported experiencing housing stress.

To meet the need present in the community, members of St Vincent de Paul Society Conferences in Maitland, Rutheford, Dungog and East Maitland have united under one roof at the newly opened Maitland Hub, which will serve as a base for the Society’s work in the Lower Hunter region.

“The larger space that the new hub provides will enable our members to deliver an improved experience to the people we assist, along with offering additional services,” said Yolanda Saiz, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO.

The new hub, which was officially opened at the beginning of February, is providing locals facing hardship and disadvantage with a range of services including assistance with food, household bills and other expenses, as well as referrals to local services, counselling and case workers.

Other services offered through the hub include the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS), providing loans to people facing hardship for essentials and housing expenses, along with Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA), an initiative run in conjunction with Service NSW to help households pay electricity and gas bills during times of crisis.

The Society was able to establish the hub thanks to a generous donation by the Cootes Family Foundation; John Cootes OAM was born in Maitland and has been a long-time member of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Clare sees the Maitland Hub acting as a one-stop shop which will complement existing services in the community and give people the support they need without having to jump through hoops during times of crisis.

“We’re all striving to do the same thing to support vulnerable people in our community.”

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has a long-standing commitment to supporting regional communities and meeting need wherever it exists. We are so grateful for your contribution which will enable our members, volunteers and employees to continue making an impact for many years to come.

VINNIES
RENEWS

See more from the Maitland Hub opening by scanning the QR code:



Community and camaraderie found at St Joseph's Workshop

IN A FACTORY AT WEST GOSFORD, THE AIR REVERBERATES WITH THE SOUNDS OF CIRCULAR SAWS, POWER SANDERS AND DRILLS AS VOLUNTEERS BUILD FURNITURE FOR CHARITY AT ST JOSEPH'S WORKSHOP.

The bustling workshop has been an integral asset to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW since its foundation in 1992. Developed as one of the Society's Community Inclusion programs, workshop volunteers are provided with opportunities to produce new furniture made from recycled or donated building materials. The finished pieces are distributed through the Society to give a practical hand up to people who are experiencing hardship.

David Murphy, Vinnies Regional Manager, says that "this came about because, although we get lovely donations from the community for furniture and stuff, we didn't have enough. So we ended up finding recycled timber, and we had some tradesman who were skilled, and trade ladies, and they just started making the furniture. So yeah, we've got this Australian-made, high quality furniture that we're able to produce on mass to fill that need and help people".

The hard work of the volunteers is what makes the magic happen at St Joseph's Workshop, but many of those who donate their time receive more than a sense of doing good for the community. Kevin O'Donnell, one of the dedicated volunteers, says "we're getting 12, 13, sometimes 15 guys in on a day to manufacture all these goods for welfare... they get the camaraderieship of working with other guys, and using their skills".

A large portion of the volunteers are people over 55. Kevin says that he's seen volunteers come from a wide range of careers such as airline pilots, doctors or pharmacists, and how they've come to the workshop to be productive with their spare time or to address loneliness after retirement. At the factory they're able to use a large tea room for gatherings or to have a good chat outside of the noisy workshop space.

No qualifications or experience is required from volunteers at St Joseph's Workshop, so anyone can arrive to be trained in making items such as chests of drawers, garment racks, tables and chairs. Mary, who started out volunteering in the workshop and now works in the office, says that "we put a bit of colour into the furniture now...



the stock that goes through here is just amazing, and people aren't aware of it, you know? I wasn't aware of it until I joined and I thought, oh I want to give back to society. And I tried it and I just haven't looked back, 10 years later."

Community Inclusion is an important focus in the work of St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, with various programs and services currently in operation throughout the state. Funding these programs assists people who are experiencing social exclusion to find a safe space for participation, access, and inclusion in the community.

**VINNIES
REBUILDS**



Vinnies provides 750kg of fashion waste for Sydney Festival

EACH YEAR, THE AVERAGE AUSTRALIAN PRODUCES 23 KILOGRAMS OF FASHION WASTE.

This is a huge problem when considering our combined efforts to move towards a more sustainable, carbon neutral future as the fashion industry is one of the biggest polluters globally. Reusing or repurposing used clothing items is just one of the ways that Vinnies is working to reduce the environmental impact.

The House of Fast Fashion event, part of Sydney Festival in January, was held to raise awareness about the overwhelming amount of waste produced by the fashion industry. Vinnies provided a massive 750kg pile of discarded fashion items for repurpose. Participants made elaborate creations from the unsellable

garments, then flaunted their styles on the runway with over 800 people watching on.

Of the 5,000 volunteers that regularly assist with operating the 220+ Vinnies shops in NSW, a few were on hand to help participants with cutting, stitching, and safety-pinning before their designs were paraded on the catwalk. Lizzy, who can usually be found at the Crown Street Vinnies working behind the counter or sorting stock, volunteered so that she could encourage others to learn sewing skills.

"It's been very fun," Lizzy said. When asked about the people that have stopped by for assistance, she explained that their fashion projects have been "mainly dresses, but I have someone here who is working on a bag... they're all very ambitious and I love to see that."

Vinnies requests quality donations

Vinnies hopes to shine a light on the quality of op shop donations through the House of Fast Fashion collaboration. Generous gifts of used clothing resulted in 3.2 million kilograms of donated textiles passing through the six Vinnies distribution centres in New South Wales last financial year. Unfortunately, a large portion of the textiles processed are dirty, stained, or torn.

Anuja Mukim, Product Stewardship Manager at St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, says that the 750kg of fashion waste provided for Sydney Festival represents just a fraction of the total amount of clothing that can't be sold at stores. "Unfortunately, only 15 to 20 percent of [donated textiles] is actually usable," says Anuja. While 3.9 million pieces of clothing were able to be resold in Vinnies stores last year, 8 out of every 10 items that Vinnies received through donations were unable to be placed on the racks for sale.

Anuja hopes that the House of Fast Fashion event reminds people to think about the quality of their future clothing donations. Most of the items that aren't sellable are received dirty, mouldy, or wet, so ensuring that clothes are clean and dry before they are donated makes a big difference. "It literally takes one wash and a lot can be saved", says Anuja. She encourages everyone who is clearing out their wardrobes to remember that "if you'd give it to a mate, it's good to donate".

The cost of recycling or disposing of unsellable goods reduces the total funds raised by the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, which is money that would otherwise go towards helping people in need. When Vinnies stores receive higher quality donations, shops can raise more funds and the Society can use that to better serve the community.



Catherine lives on with a legacy gift

THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW IS ABLE TO IMPACT THOUSANDS OF LIVES FOR THE BETTER EACH YEAR THROUGH THE GOODWILL AND FINANCIAL GENEROSITY OF BEQUESTORS WHO LEAVE A GIFT IN THEIR WILL.

These gifts – such as the one left by Catherine Flynn – play a crucial role in ensuring that our services remain sustainable and can meet the need that grows across the state.

Catherine Flynn was born in the NSW Hunter Valley village of Stanford Merthyr in 1934. Growing up in a family with a close association to the St Vincent de Paul Society – her father, Richard (Dick), headed up the local St Joseph's Parish Conference – the value of education was instilled by her parents, resulting in a lifelong love of learning for Catherine and vocation for teaching. Attending Catholic schools in Kurri Kurri and Maitland before studying at Newcastle Teacher's College, Catherine's first position as an educator was in the Coalfield's hamlet of Pelaw Main.

Continuing her studies by obtaining a degree in psychology, she progressed into a role as a school counsellor on the Central Coast where she would reside for much of her life.

FLYNN, Catherine Ellen

13 January 1934 - 17 December 2022

Late of Stanford Merthyr NSW and Gorokan NSW

Catherine passed away peacefully at Greenway Views, Tuggeranong ACT on the morning of 17 December 2022. Cath was privately cremated in Canberra and will join her Mum and Dad and Charlie at Kurri Cemetery.

The daughter of Richard and Kate Flynn late of Stanford Merthyr, and sister to James, John, Charles, Anne (all dec) and Patrick.

Catherine was a favourite of many nieces and nephews and strongly respected by family members, friends, and professional colleagues.

As an expert teacher and school psychologist, Catherine gave so much of herself to everyone she encountered through life.

WILLIAM COLE FUNERALS
Canberra



Settling in Gorokan, where she lived with her mother, Catherine (Kate), after the passing of her father, Catherine lived out her faith through the Catholic church by singing with the parish choir at Toukley and distributing communion to the elderly and disadvantaged in the community.

A generous spirit who welcomed guests with hospitality into her home, Catherine's musical skills, where she was trained in piano and self-taught the flute, saw her in-demand to sing at functions and participate enthusiastically in various choir groups.

As a descendant of Scottish and Irish families, Catherine held a strong attachment to her heritage and made a number of visits to the 'Old Country' throughout her life.

Catherine became a full-time carer in the later stages of her mother's life, while following the deterioration of her own health, she moved to Canberra where she passed away in care at the age of 88.

Beloved by her family and respected professionally by her peers,

Catherine's legacy will live on through a generous gift that will allow the St Vincent de Paul Society to meet the growing demand for assistance.

VINNIES
RENEWS

We thank Catherine for her generosity and extend our sympathy to her loved ones for their loss.

To learn more about leaving a gift in your will, please contact our Bequest Manager, Cherie McKenna. Phone: (02) 8622 0387 or Email: cherie.mckenna@vinnies.org.au

Spreading Christmas cheer and care

IT'S CONSIDERED THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR, BUT IN LIGHT OF CONTINUED COST OF LIVING PRESSURES MANY HOUSEHOLDS APPROACHED THIS PAST CHRISTMAS SEASON WITH TREPIDATION.



Thankfully, our members and volunteers stepped up with hampers and gifts to make the 25th of December a little brighter for those doing it tough!

In the Sydney suburb of Redfern – several thousand kilometres away from the North Pole – the Vinnies Support Centre was given a festive makeover by transforming into Santa's workshop with an assortment of presents on offer for those young and young at heart.

A constant stream of people entered the makeshift workshop in the weeks leading up to Christmas with each person receiving a hand-sewn Santa sack to be filled to the brim with gifts.

"One of the beauties of this initiative is that parents, carers, grandparents get to choose the items that they know their children would appreciate and enjoy," said Donna Boyd, Metropolitan Team Leader.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, our members and volunteers were able to meet hardship with boundless compassion to ensure Christmas could be a day of celebration for all.

"We just tried to make sure that no one misses out."

VINNIES
REBUILDS

See Channel 9 visit our Redfern Support Centre by **scanning the QR code:**



WITH YOUR HELP WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Supporter No. _____

Title _____ First Name _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Suburb/Town _____ State _____ Postcode _____

Tel _____ M _____ Email _____

☐ I would like to make a recurring donation of \$ _____ per month

OR ☐ I would like to increase my recurring donation by \$ _____

OR ☐ I would like to make a single gift of \$ _____

**DONATIONS OF
\$2 OR MORE ARE
TAX DEDUCTIBLE**

Please debit the amount indicated to my credit card: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Diners

Card Number _____

Card Holder's Name _____ Expiry Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

OR ☐ Please find enclosed my Cheque/Money Order made payable to 'St Vincent de Paul Society NSW'

☐ Please tick here if you would like information about remembering the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in your Will

☐ I have already left a gift to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in my Will

All communications are treated in the strictest confidence. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW follows the Australian Privacy Principles. If you do not wish your details to be used for future fundraising activities please tick this box. ☐

SVA24/MTA24



To make a recurring or single donation, simply complete your details and post to:

St Vincent de Paul Society
PO Box 19
Petersham NSW 2049
(02) 9568 0262
vinnies@vinnies.org.au
vinnies.org.au
Donation hotline: 13 18 12
ABN: 91 161 127 340

ON BEHALF OF ALL THE
PEOPLE WHO WERE
ASSISTED BY VINNIES...

THANK YOU.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works