



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

# 2020–21 NATIONAL OVERVIEW



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# OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

## Our Mission

The St Vincent de Paul Society (the Society) is a lay Catholic organisation which 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 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 Aspiration

An Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice. The Society advocates on several pressing social justice issues such as homelessness, poverty, and asylum seekers. To read more about the Society's work in these areas and others, please visit the 'Our Impact' section of our website.

## Our Key Values

We have identified seven key values to which we are aligned. They include commitment, compassion, respect, integrity, empathy, advocacy and courage. We are proud of the key values for which we stand and invite you to find out more through the 'Get Involved' section of our website.



### 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.

## Faith in Action

Vincentians believe that Jesus Christ is not only God, but also truly human and at home in our world. When the voice of the poor calls, they willingly leave their prayers, or other religious practice knowing that they are leaving God for God.

They seek to honour, love and serve their truly human God by honouring, loving and serving the poor, the abandoned, the victims of exclusion and adversity. Inspired by the compassion of Jesus Christ to all people, Vincentians seek to be compassionate, kind and deeply reverent to all those they serve. With trust in God's help, they see their work as a continuation of Christ's own work. Vincentians express their love for God and for all God's people, by the sweat of their brow and the strength of their arms. They seek to do this with gentleness and humility, striving to be selfless and genuine, yet passionate about the needs of the poor.

*The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.*

# President's Report

## *Emerging from COVID-19*

As I write this, COVID-19 has been with us for more than 18 months and the impact has been well documented. While people are slowly getting vaccinated we are a long way from being 'out of this'. The future remains uncertain, but it's looking brighter, and we dare to hope that Australia will bounce back.

But bounce back to what? Despite the devastation, or perhaps because of it, we have had a glimpse of what a fairer Australia might look like. People who had been experiencing homelessness were accommodated in hotels, providing a base from which they could begin to seek help and get their lives back on track.

Governments listened to experts and consequently increased the level of income support, meaning that many people finally had that little bit extra they needed to ensure they could eat nutritious meals every day without having to access support from charitable organisations.

We were reminded daily of the importance of a properly resourced public health system, and gained a new appreciation for the caring professions.

We were also reminded that insecure work and poor working conditions ultimately impact the community at large, as well as the workers forced into that work in order to get by. And that home is not a place of safety and happiness for all.

I had hoped we, and especially our governments, would learn from all of this and build back better, but my optimism is waning: the Federal Government's decision to drop Centrelink payments to their pre-pandemic levels has seen demand for our services increase. There is no indication that governments will address the structural issues that see migrants, refugees, visa-holders and other people on the margins forced into insecure work or poverty.

Some state and territory governments have made welcome announcements in relation to emergency or social housing, yet we still have no national strategy and associated funding commitment to address the significant shortfall in affordable housing.

All of this means that our advocacy work is more important than ever. National Council, working in collaboration with our skilled and passionate secretariat staff and committees, has consistently represented our members and those we assist over the past year through submissions, collaborations and publications, and these efforts will only escalate as we head towards the next Federal Election.

**Claire Victory**  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT





# CEO's Report

## *An Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice*

The 2020-2021 year saw the National Council continue to implement its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. Strategic areas advanced included exploring a proposal to revise the Rule Part III; preparing advice on the movement by councils from incorporated associations to companies limited by guarantee; exploring governance protocols which seek to bring a light touch where there are intersections with State and Territory Councils; developing a brand stewardship approach for the Society in Australia; finding common principles to achieve greater unity of some policy areas across the nine jurisdictions; and the establishment of the Spirit of Youth, which reinforces the place of young people in the life of the Society in Australia and seeks to include young people in National Council governance structures – see chart below.

The Society's National Redress Company became fully operational mid-way through the year and this has involved putting in place communication and secure sharing of information protocols with each jurisdiction in order to meet the requirements of the National Redress Scheme.

The Secretariat's workplan reflected the strategic goals being advanced by National Council. The implementation of the workplan was carried out with the oversight of National Council and many initiatives have involved working directly with National Council members.

I wish to acknowledge and thank members of National Council, the State and Territory Councils and my fellow Chief Executive Officers for the collegial spirit they brought to assisting with delivering the National Council's many strategic objectives. Working in a national/state governance paradigm presents challenges that require patience and commitment to achieve goals that strengthen an outward looking 'one Society'.

## *The new normal*

It goes without saying that during the past year all Australians continued to address the everyday disruptive challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in all manner of ways. In a work environment, disruption was not limited to the operational spaces. National Council work continued through short virtual meetings and circular resolutions. This method of meeting has highlighted to National Council members that face-to-face meetings encourage the vitality of personal working relationships over transactional



connections with the former playing a vital element in advancing collegial leadership.

The value of good relationships has particular relevance for addressing complex governance challenges that arise from a membership-based, tiered approach where the principle of subsidiarity is properly understood. These challenges must be faced if the Society is to maintain its place as a Gospel inspired charity in contemporary Australia.

The metropolitan and regional lockdowns and social distancing requirements brought about by the ongoing pandemic curtailed most face-to-face meetings of National Council. These were challenging circumstances for all of the Society in Australia, for the National Council and for its Secretariat.

Maintaining safe working environments and business continuity necessitated working from home for many National Council employees, and I am pleased to report that these arrangements turned out remarkably well. I take this opportunity to thank our workforce for the way they adapted to these new conditions and in particular for the strong pastoral care demonstrated to work colleagues.

## *How we assisted those in need*

National Council continued to provide a conduit between Vincentian councils and our members in bushfire struck regions and the Commonwealth Government and on a range of bushfire recovery matters. The first-hand experiences of our members and the valuable local contributions they made to distressed communities were recognised by the Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2019-20 Bushfires and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

We are indebted to John Feint, President of Canberra/Goulburn Territory Council, for his appearances at these inquiries and the in-depth knowledge he provided on a range of matters being explored.

# CEO's Report

◀ The National Council Secretariat facilitated the publication on the Society website of timely information on the expenditure of funds donated in response to the Black Summer Bushfires that was provided by Queensland, NSW, Canberra/Goulburn, Victoria and South Australia Councils. National Council took a decision to manage future national natural disaster appeals and continues to work with the States and Territories to bring this about.

The Society's reputation for responding quickly to challenges saw the Commonwealth request National Council's support to provide administrative and research services to a ministerial advisory committee established in response to increased demand on Emergency Relief funds during the COVID-19 pandemic.

National Council's role has involved liaison with the state and territory councils to provide trend data and analysis of localised impacts that have assisted strategic proposals about the distribution of additional funds to all Emergency Response providers. This work resulted in closer collaboration with Australia's major charities as coordinated responses were developed and reviewed by the committee. The voice of the Society on the ministerial advisory committee will continue in the next period.

## *Speaking for those who are voiceless*

Even though the pandemic closed many businesses across Australia, the Federal Parliament worked at a pace. The number of submissions prepared this year was 21. The capacity of our social policy expert, coupled with contributions from the Social Justice Advisory Committee, to respond to such a wide variety of policy matters allows the Society to speak with authority on behalf of those without a voice.

The Parliament and the media know that a key attribute of the Society in Australia is its ability to receive information about the everyday difficulties people experience in their local communities and to relay these needs to politicians. This enables the Society at the federal and the state/territory levels to bring to the attention of the public real-life concerns in real time in our advocacy for a more just Australia.

We continue our vocal and persistent calls for recognising the human rights of migrants and refugees. The ongoing lack of compassion for people who have fled in fear of their lives, especially those who are in detention, continues to be a blight on our nation.

## *Partnering with government*

Maintaining the operation of the national drought Call Centre during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the Society to continue to deliver uninterrupted support and financial assistance to a growing number of farmers and farming communities in drought affected Local Government Areas. This Commonwealth program was extended several times during the period. Extension of this initiative saw the Society cover 117 drought declared Local Government Areas across the nation, reaching 20,000 individuals and families.

Without working collaboratively with our state and the territory colleagues the Society could not have supplemented the government's \$3,000 financial assistance with offers of a Vincentian hand-up to those in need across such a vast area. We thank our colleagues for their wonderful efforts.

Together, the Society is delivering a wraparound response to drought affected communities. We know that people need more than financial assistance. The personhood approach we bring to such initiatives is something governments acknowledge that they cannot deliver. This is why charities like the St Vincent de Paul Society have such strong partnerships with governments in times of need.

We acknowledge the commitment of our drought team for the way in which it embodied Frederic Ozanam's charity and empathy towards all those who were facing distress and financial stress from the ravages of the droughts. Although our team was thousands of miles away from those at the end of the telephone line they were able to offer and share tenderness and compassion to many people who faced significant hardship. Importantly, they were able to connect them to local conferences for more support. It is anticipated that this initiative will be completed in July 2021.

On behalf of my colleagues working in the Secretariat, I thank the members of National Council for the vision they bring to the Society's mission in Australia and to our overseas development relationships. I thank them for the enthusiasm, passion and forbearance they bring to the work they do on behalf of National Council.

We look forward to the coming year in the hope and expectation that while we are unlikely to return to pre-pandemic work practices as we once knew them, we will be able to grow our collegial relationships through more in-place meetings. Person-to-person contact continues to lie at the heart of our mission.

**Toby oConnor**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# National Council Members – 30 June 2021

## Claire Victory

National President  
Elected March 2019  
Member from May 2011

## Warwick Fulton

Deputy President  
Appointed March 2019  
Member from March 2016

## Ryan Erlandsen

Secretary  
Appointed June 2019

## Sr Therese Haywood DC

Spiritual Advisor  
Appointed June 2019

## Paul Trezise

Treasurer  
Appointed July 2019

## Kevin McMahon

State President Vic  
Elected effective March 2018

## Glady Demissie

State President WA  
Elected effective July 2018

## John Feint

Territory President Canberra-Goulburn  
Elected effective June 2019

## Mark Gaetani

State President Tas  
Elected effective January 2019

## Jocelyn Cull

Territory President NT  
Elected effective August 2020

## Fay Gurr

Territory President NT  
September 2016 – August 2020

## Dennis Innes

State President Qld  
Elected effective June 2018

## Brad Hocking

State President SA  
Elected effective October 2020

## Catherine Beaton

State President SA  
May 2017 – October 2020

## Peter McNamara

State President NSW  
Elected effective November 2019

## Maurice Ryan

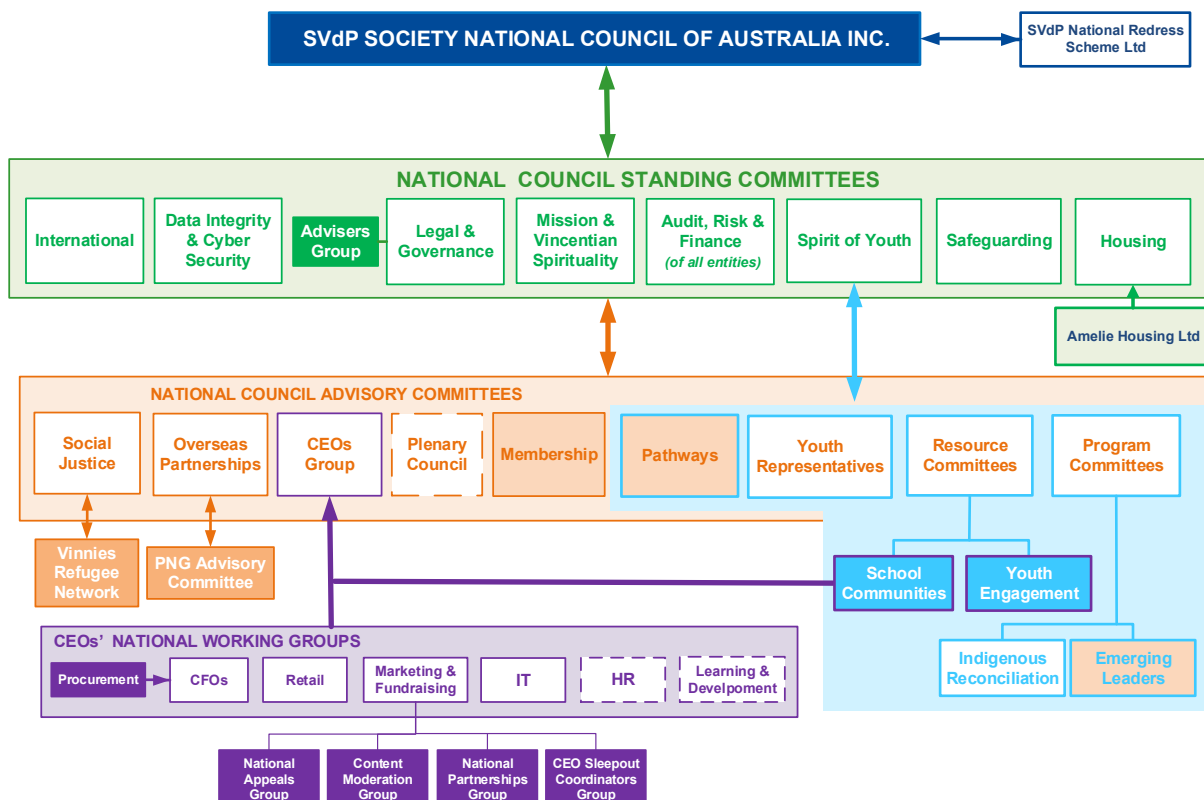
Vice President  
Appointed June 2019

## Patrick Wallis

Vice President  
Appointed June 2019

## SVdP Governance Chart

As at 15 July 2021



# National Council Secretariat Staff – 30 June 2021

## **CEO**

Toby oConnor

## **Executive Officer**

Donna Scheerlinck

## **Executive Assistant**

Karen Hutchinson 14 April 2021 - present  
Kara Gibbs (until November 2020)

## **National Policy and Research Director**

Rose Beynon

## **National Communications Director**

Judith Tokley

## **National Web & Digital Manager**

Vincent Nguyen

## **Overseas Development Program Facilitator**

Tricia Wilden 1 June 2021 - present  
Jude Blacklock (until May 2021)

## **Website Project User Experience**

Garry Burns

## **National Publications Officer**

Robin Osborne

## **National Manager Drought Relief Program**

Cassandra Bull

## **Former Technical Writer**

Peter Brady  
*Contracted to April 2021*

## **National Coordinator COVID-19 Emergency Relief Program**

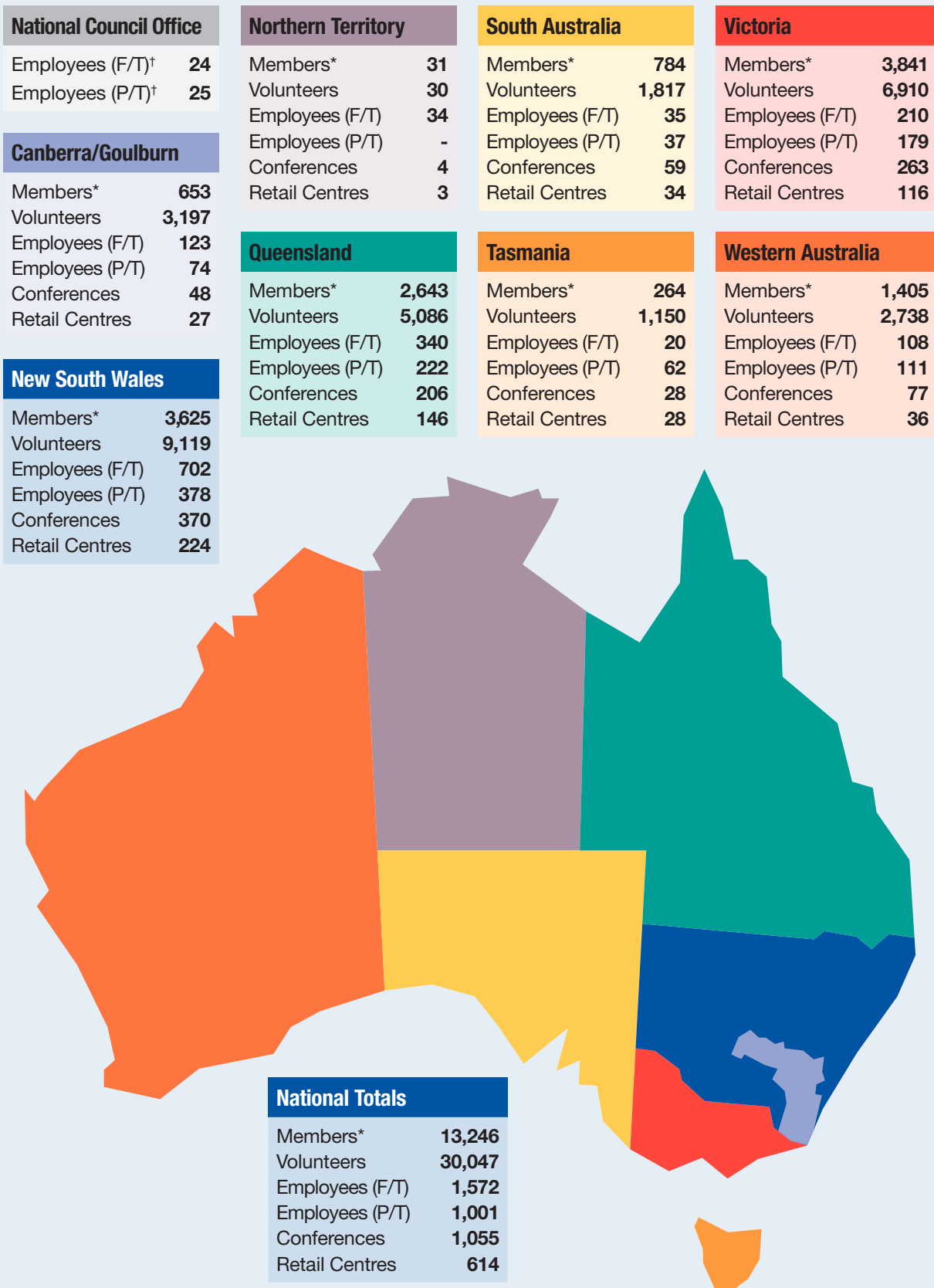
Patrick McKenna  
*Contracted to 1 July 2021*

## **National Marketing Projects Manager**

Bianca D’Rosario (until May 2021)



# National Statistics



<sup>†</sup> Including members of the drought Team (see page 17)

\* Associate Members have been included in the Members' count.

# Strategic Plan

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia launched its three-year [Strategic Plan](#) in August 2020 as it continues to work to shape a more just and compassionate society.

Across five strategic goals and six long-term objectives the Plan lays out a blueprint for the work of the Society for the next three years while also setting the foundations for the next decade.

The five priority areas are spirituality, advocacy, leadership and governance, working in a federated environment and the sustainability of the organisation in an ever-changing world.

The Plan will continue to support people in their Vincentian spiritual journey through a positive and supportive environment where people are welcomed and feel valued and committed to contribute to our mission. Our advocacy will influence Australian national priorities by connecting the voice of people experiencing disadvantage with those who can make a difference.

Through leadership and good governance, we will provide the practical support opportunities that allow us to serve local communities. The Plan also clearly sets out the roles and functions of the National Council and the ways in which it supports the State and Territory Councils in facilitating good works. Importantly, across these priorities, the National Council has determined measures to gauge our success in achieving the strategic goals.

The Plan is the culmination of nine months' discernment, drawing heavily on Vincentian spirituality. It outlines new horizons for cooperation and collaboration within the Society and with like-minded partners who are committed to bringing about a fairer Australia.

It will bring about a stronger, more integrated Society that, as we enter what might well be the most difficult period in Australia's recent history, is well placed to meet the new and uncertain challenges that lie ahead.

**Claire Victory**  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT



# National Redress Scheme Limited

The Society committed to join the National Redress Scheme following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which handed its Final Report to the Parliament in December 2017.

When determining how the Society could best respond to the needs of victims of sexual abuse, the society's first priority has always been and remains the care of and compassionate response to anyone who makes an allegation of sexual abuse against the Society.

As reported in the last period, the **National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018** allows all of the Society's entities operating in Australia to be enlisted as a single 'Participating Group' for the purpose of being joined to the Redress Scheme.

In March 2020, the National Council along with the State and the Territory Councils established a company St Vincent de Paul Society National Redress Scheme Ltd ('the Company') as the entity to be joined to the Redress Scheme.

National Council is the Company Member. It appointed Mr Denis Walsh (Wollongong) as the inaugural chair of the board of directors and Ms Liz Callaghan (Canberra) and Mr Damian Wallis (Perth) as directors. The National Council CEO is Company Secretary. The Company is supported by National Council Secretariate employees.

Establishing the company represented a significant milestone for the Society in Australia on three fronts.

First, it formalised the Society's commitment to support persons who suffered sexual abuse where this involved the Society.

Secondly, it simplified the activities and structures of the Society in Australia in a way that made it easier for people wanting to bring a complaint against a person engaged in one of the Society's many special works or charitable activities. The Company has over 700 institutions (special works and offices) listed with the commonwealth. At a practical level, the Company ensures that claimants through the Scheme Operator can approach a single entity when seeking to make a redress claim involving any part of the Society in Australia.

And thirdly, it required the nine jurisdictions to agree

to collaborative longer-term planning arrangements to ensure all jurisdictions could respond to possible future redress claims throughout the full life of the Redress Scheme.

The Minister for Families and Social Services joined the Company to the National Redress Scheme in December 2020. February 2021 saw the Commonwealth include all of the Society's defunct institutions across all jurisdictions under the Company. This aggregation of special works and activities that no longer operate allows claims to be brought to the relevant Participating Institution through the Company.

The Redress Scheme deals with private and highly sensitive information. There are legislated penalties for breaches of privacy and the sharing of information with unauthorised persons. Each State and Territory Council has nominated an officer to be the contact between the jurisdiction and the Company.

These authorised officers hold a delegation from the Company to assist it respond to individual claims of sexual assault involving the Society forwarded by the Scheme Operator. The authorised officers respond to requests for information from the Scheme Operator as part of the investigative processes around individual claims made by an individual against the Society.

Authorised Officers follow up these requests for information by searching archival and contemporary records held by the jurisdiction. This searching can provide a challenge across the Society where historical records have not been assembled, catalogued or easily accessible. In many instances, the Company must respond to requests for information within a four-week period due to the age or the circumstances of the claimant. Where a request does not have a priority status, the period is extended to eight weeks.

The board of directors met three times during the period. It provides a report to the Member after each board meeting. The cost of managing the Company is covered by the State and the Territory Councils. The Company is part of the National Council Group for auditing purposes.

**Toby oConnor**  
COMPANY SECRETARY

# National Bushfire Response

As the second anniversary of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfire season nears it is timely to reflect on the resilience and achievements of bushfire-affected communities and to acknowledge the continued support provided by members and volunteers as these communities rebuild their lives.

The last 18 months have been like no other in living memory. The pandemic has challenged us all, health-wise, financially and socially, particularly those impacted by the bushfires. They have been trying to rebuild their homes, farms, businesses and communities when everything was far from normal and assistance was often hampered by lockdowns and social distancing, resulting in disruptions to supply chains, construction, land clearance, health services and education.

Thanks to the generosity of everyday Australians, \$25.8 million was raised through the Society's Bushfire Appeal and \$12.2 million was received from the Commonwealth Government for emergency relief. \$23.1 million (91 per cent) has been spent across Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia. The remaining \$2.4 million (9 per cent) will be used for recovery projects to June 2022. All Commonwealth emergency relief funds have been expended.

In the immediate aftermath of the bushfires, help was provided through financial assistance (payment of utility, rent, transport, education, veterinary and medical costs), vouchers for food, clothing and household items and access to crisis accommodation. As communities transitioned from crisis to recovery, the response was tailored to address complex individual and community needs. This included education grants and providing or referring people to support services and addressing infrastructure needs, such as fencing and access to water and power (through water tanks, generators and solar panels).

Now in the rebuilding phase, help takes the form of community grants. Funding rounds support local organisations with local solutions, ranging from rebuilding community facilities and establishing community gardens and outdoor play areas to supporting the arts in regional centres and training in land management organised by Aboriginal Land Councils.

A Bushfire Recovery and Community Development Program is also operating in up to eight local government areas in New South Wales. Local work plans are being developed in consultation with councils, community groups and community members with the aim of improving resilience, disaster preparedness, wellbeing and environmental rehabilitation, regeneration and productivity. The



Society's local conference members are supporting this Program, as well as continuing to provide emergency relief and other support, as needed.

The Society prepared two submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into *Lessons to be learned in relation to the 2019-20 Australian bushfire season* and the *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*, and gave evidence before both.

The Society called for:

- Better coordination and information sharing across all levels of governments and agencies so that people only need to tell their story once.
- Improved telecommunications systems in isolated communities.
- Increased funding for the ongoing delivery of trauma-informed and case managed support (this is especially needed for the elderly and people living with disability).
- Increased funding and improved access to crisis/emergency accommodation.
- Reduced red-tape for people impacted by bushfires, including with banks, insurance companies, local governments for development approval and small business processes, and applying for government payments (such as automatically populating application forms with information already held by Services Australia/MyGov).



- Improved information to help people decide whether to rebuild or not, especially if local development assessment guidelines have changed and insurance premiums have increased.
- Increased flexibility on grant administration processes to support emergency responses, such as not limiting grant funding to organisations that already have a grant agreement in place (this would bolster a local organisation's capacity to respond to need and help keep them in business).
- Streamlined national fundraising laws.
- The establishment of a permanent Commonwealth agency to replace the National Bushfire Agency when its two-year period expires (2020-21 Pre Budget submission).

The Royal Commission's final report captured several issues raised by the Society, including the difficulties of working across agencies and levels of governments, the complexity of current fundraising laws and the need to improve service responses, co-ordination, information sharing and community education.

Information sharing warranted a specific recommendation (22.2), namely that Australian, state and territory governments ensure that personal information of individuals affected by a natural disaster is appropriately shared between all levels of government, agencies, insurers, charities and organisations delivering recovery services, taking account of all necessary safeguards to ensure the sharing is only for recovery purposes.

The Australian Government has supported this recommendation and while it has committed to working with governments and agencies to make this occur, the status of this work is unclear.

A single national scheme for the regulation of charitable fundraising was also recommended (21.2). The Australian Government has supported this recommendation in principle, noting that it requires a referral of powers by the states and territories. Instead, the Government will work closely with the states and territories (through relevant cross-jurisdictional groups) to streamline and harmonise charities regulation. The New South Wales Government is leading an inter jurisdictional Charitable Fundraising National Working Group to work on harmonising charitable fundraising arrangements by the states and territories.

The Society prepared a submission to the National Working Group's discussion paper and awaits further information on the status of this work.

The Royal Commission noted the value of increased communication to donors and the public about the collection of donated funds, the nature of the

assistance provided, administrative costs, how much has been distributed and the timeframes involved. It considered that governments could also play a role in helping to educate the public about the protracted nature of recovery processes and the need for charities to act judiciously with donated funds but did not make a recommendation on this matter.

The Royal Commission recommended that a standing national recovery and resilience agency be established and regular meetings convened with charities, non-government organisations and volunteer groups to improve coordination of recovery support (21.3). The Society was an active member of the National Charities Bushfire Forum and continues to meet regularly with the Government's newly established National Recovery and Resilience Agency.

The Royal Commission also considered that financial assistance provided to individuals should be consolidated to improve clarity and reduce the need for multiple applications and that national technology should be developed to shift the burden from individuals having to chase support. However, the Royal Commission did not make recommendations on these matters.

During the bushfire period, the Society provided regular updates on bushfire donations received and the progress of activities both on its website and in articles featured in *The Record*. The Society has also convened a national working group to advise National Council on how to improve transparency when national natural disasters are declared.

The Society's submission to Treasury's consultation paper on a Transparency Code for Charities supports a voluntary transparency code for national emergencies, managed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission through the Charity Passport, and promoted by a government-funded community education campaign.

Finally, thanks go to the Australian public for their generous donations used to assist many individuals, families and communities affected by the 2019-20 bushfires. Thanks also go to the tireless efforts, empathy and support provided by the Society's members, volunteers and staff to bushfire communities, both in the immediate aftermath of the fires and during the rebuilding phase.

Much has been learnt from the 2019-20 bushfire season. The Society hopes that through this experience, all levels of governments, state and territory agencies and not-for-profit organisations will continue to work together to continue to improve service responses and assistance provided to those in need.

**Rose Beynon**  
NATIONAL POLICY AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR



## Social Advocacy Report

The last financial year presented many challenges, not the least of which included helping those who needed a hand-up during times of isolation and hardship, while maintaining social distancing and keeping everyone safe.

Resources were juggled to respond to increased demand for assistance while revenue sources were reduced, as shops were locked down and people less able to donate.

There is no doubt the Coronavirus supplement payments and JobKeeper were significant in terms of helping companions to manage during the crisis and the Society to keep doing its work.

However, direct advocacy with Ministers and Senators was vital to highlighting what was happening on the ground, what members, staff and volunteers were witnessing first-hand, and what was needed to address existing and emerging community needs.

The Society's close working relationships with the Department of Social Services, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the newly formed National Recovery Resilience Agency meant that we could continue to provide financial

and emergency relief and support services to those who were not just affected by COVID-19 but also by drought and bushfires.

The Society strengthened its advocacy voice by working with other major charities and not for profit organisations that held similar positions on key social policy issues. These included The Salvation Army, Catholic Social Services Australia, ACOSS, National Shelter Australia, Refugee Council of Australia, Jesuit Refugee Service, Catholics for People Seeking Asylum, Catholics for Refugees, UnitingCare Australia, Anglicare Australia, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (including the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office) and the Hands Off Our Charities (HOOC) Coalition.

Representation on key government and non-government advisory groups and boards provided an opportunity to influence and shape the direction of social policy and programs. These bodies included the Department of Social Services' Community Services Advisory Group and National Coordination Group (for emergency relief), National Shelter Australia's board, the National Charity Bushfire Recovery Forum and the Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings Stakeholder Reference Group.

Twenty-one submissions were prepared in response to the:

- Social Cohesion Statement
- Inquiry into homelessness in Australia
- Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence
- Proposed cross-border recognition model for charitable fundraisers (streamlining of fundraising laws)
- Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Continuation of Cashless Welfare) Bill 2020
- Inquiry into climate change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bills (joint submission with The Salvation Army)
- Inquiry into lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019 20
- Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill 2020 [Provisions]
- Customs Amendment (Banning Goods Produced By Uyghur Forced Labour) Bill 2020
- Social Services Legislation Amendment (Strengthening Income Support) Bill 2021
- proposed changes to Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Regulations, Governance Standard 3 concerning unlawful activity
- National Emergency Declaration Act 2020
- Inquiry into the impact of insecure or precarious employment on the economy, wages, social cohesion and workplace rights and conditions
- Indigenous voice co-design interim report
- Inquiry into the purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension
- Social Services Legislation Amendment (Consistent Waiting Periods for New Migrants) Bill 2021
- Migration Amendment (Strengthening the Character Test) Bill 2019 (letter)
- Migration Amendment (Prohibiting Items in Immigration Detention Facilities) Bill 2020 (media release)
- Social Security Legislation Amendment (Streamlined Participation Requirements and Other Measures) Bill 2021, and
- Federal Budget, specifically August 20 and January 21 Pre Budget submissions

The Society gave evidence before the parliamentary inquiries into homelessness, family and domestic violence, COVID-19, the 2019-20 bushfires and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Representations were also made to Federal Ministers on cuts to Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) funding of specialist homelessness services, alcohol and other drugs and settlement services and the plight of people seeking asylum. Issues included the 'fast-track' processing of 1,100 people seeking asylum, cuts to funding and changed eligibility criteria for the Status Resolution Support Service and limited access to income support and housing assistance.

The Society also called on the Australian Government to comply with its international obligations, specifically the seven core international human rights treaties and seven other protocols to which we are a party.

Regular articles also appeared in The Record covering the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires, the social determinants of health, the plight of people seeking asylum (by the Vincentian Refugee Network) and funding for family and domestic violence.

The Society signed on to the Everybody's Home campaign for increased social housing, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's Time for a Home campaign, Homelessness Australia's campaign concerning ERO funding cuts, ACTU's campaign waiving intellectual property provisions on the COVID-19 vaccine, the From the Heart campaign, the HOOC campaign concerning proposed changes to ACNC regulations, the Our Democracy campaign, the Refugee Council of Australia's No Child Left Behind campaign, the Healthy Home for Renters campaign and the Change the Record campaign.

The Society continues to be a proud sponsor of Anti-Poverty Week and the Everybody's Home Campaign, as well as UNSW/ACOSS' Poverty and Inequality Project.

The Society advocates strongly against policy or program changes that exacerbate the health and wellbeing of people who are marginalised or disadvantaged. Advocacy efforts are focused on addressing poverty, especially the need to increase the base rate of many income support payments and address the chronic shortage of social and affordable housing, evident in all states and territories.



# Social Advocacy Report



The lack of acknowledgement of Australia's First Peoples, whether in the Australian Constitution or the draft Social Cohesion Statement, remains a significant issue of concern. The Society believes that better outcomes will only be achieved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to 'live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their self-determined development, in keeping with their own needs and aspirations', as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Society strongly supports calls for the Australian Government to honour its election commitment to holding a referendum once a model for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament has been settled, to support the passage of enabling legislation after the referendum and to support a membership model for the Indigenous Voice that ensures previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

The Society has also been working with the HOOC coalition, opposing amendments to ACNC Regulations which, if passed, would limit our capacity to advocate. The amendments give the

Charities Commissioner power to deregister a charity where a summary offence has occurred, even if no charge has been laid; or to act pre-emptively if charities' internal control procedures are lacking or if they have failed to ensure resources have not been used to support acts that may be indictable or summary offences. These include when someone associated with a charity blocks a public area, fails to move on when asked (whether intentionally or not) or tweets/posts support through social media in these instances.

An ACIL Allen report estimates this would cost the charity sector \$53.6 million in one-off costs and \$24.3 million in ongoing costs per year to implement the necessary administrative changes - more than 35 times the estimate provided in the Government's Regulatory Impact Statement (which excludes ongoing costs).

The Chair of the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation has recommended the amendments be disallowed because, amongst other things, they provide the ACNC Commissioner with broad discretionary powers and limit freedom of political communication. At the time of writing, this matter has yet to be resolved by the Senate.



Overall, issues outlined in the Society's submissions have been addressed in recommendations contained in:

- Interim Report, Australian bushfire season 2019-20 (October 2020)
- Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report (October 2020)
- Final Report, Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence (April 2021)

And by:

- The abeyance of the Migration Amendment (Strengthening the Character Test) Bill 2019. The Society argued that criminal conduct or risk to the community was already captured by the existing provisions and the Bill extended the Minister's discretionary powers to cancel a non-citizen's visa, even if not convicted of a crime.
- The abeyance of the Migration Amendment (Prohibiting Items in Immigration Detention Facilities) Bill 2020 due to the Senate's intention to block the Bill. The Society argued that sufficient powers already existed with respect to illegal activity and that, if passed, this would mean mobile phones could be banned from immigration detention centres. The Society maintains a watching brief on the status of the Migration Amendment Bills.
- The Federal and state and territory treasurers support for a national, cross-border registration scheme for charities to streamline compliance with fundraising laws when conducting national fundraising activities, to be progressed by the Council on Federal Financial Relations
- The abandonment of the bulk of the Fair Work Amendment Bill. The Society argued the Bill favoured big business at the expense of already vulnerable workers and did nothing to restore job security, improve workers' pay and conditions or address wage stagnation
- The release from detention of over 100 people previously medically evacuated from Papua New Guinea and Nauru. Many have been granted the right to work but have no access to Federal financial assistance.
- The Government's decision to release the four-member Murugappan family from Christmas Island
- ERO funding for specialist homelessness services and alcohol and other drug services included in the October 2020 and May 2021 Federal Budgets

- Labor's Budget reply which included \$10 billion towards social housing
- Additional Commonwealth Emergency Relief funding for COVID-19 and bushfires
- Additional Commonwealth Drought Community Support Initiative funding
- The establishment a permanent authority to manage and coordinate national responses to disasters (National Recovery and Resilience Agency)
- Emergency support assistance (albeit one-off, during COVID-19) for people on temporary visas
- Inclusion of social housing and associated energy issues as part of social infrastructure in Infrastructure Australia 2021
- External consultation by Government on the Streamlined Participation Bill. The Society criticised the limited time and consultation process conducted on the New Employment Services Trial, especially the onus placed on job seekers to navigate the system themselves, the automated nature of the process and the increased discretionary powers of the Secretary.
- The Chair of the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation recommending that amendments to the ACNC Regulations be disallowed.

Finally, thanks go to the National Council's Social Justice Advisory Committee, the Vincentian Refugee Network, the Society's state and territory Chief Executive Officers and, through all of them, to our many members, volunteers and staff for their feedback. Thanks also go to the other charities and not-for-profit organisations with which we have worked to strengthen our advocacy voice in these challenging times.

**Rose Beynon**

NATIONAL POLICY AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR

# Emergency Relief

## *The Emergency Relief National Coordination Group*

The Emergency Relief National Coordination Group (NCG), a ministerial advisory committee, was established in April 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide advice to the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston on the implementation of Emergency Relief (ER) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NCG is a collaboration between the Commonwealth and the community sector, its members including leaders of national charities providing ER services and the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, represented on the NCG by Mr Toby O'Connor, was commissioned to provide the NCG's secretariat services to the NCG until June 2021.

This provided a unique opportunity for the National Council to demonstrate the benefits of collaborative governance in the delivery of social services.

Collaborative governance is the term used to describe a cross-sector collaboration between government and non-government stakeholders to carry out a public purpose. Collaborative governance is still emerging in Australia but is well established in the UK and USA as an approach to complex social problems where there are diverse stakeholders - the wisdom and resources of such a collaboration have the potential to achieve more than an individual stakeholder could achieve on their own. The NCG was indeed able to achieve a great deal in a short period, including:

- The provision of timely, evidence-based advice to the Minister on the distribution of ER funding.
- The completion of a significant research project in partnership with University of Canberra (UC) which will soon be made available to all ER Providers across Australia.
- The evaluation of the NCG collaborative governance model in partnership with UC.

The NCG research project involved a desktop review of the existing literature on ER service provision, a large survey that all 197 Commonwealth ER Providers were invited to participate in (122 responses were received), interviews with a purposive sample of 18 ER Providers, and the development of a program logic and theory of change for the Commonwealth ER program. The findings of the research will be a valuable resource to

ER Providers across Australia, as well as informing advice provided by the NCG to the Minister in areas such as:

- Options for upskilling the ER workforce to deal with increasingly complex cases.
- The significance of volunteering in ER and options to engage and nurture volunteers.
- Components of ER service delivery such as case management, integrated services, service hubs, and referral systems.
- The ER program logic and theory of change.
- Commissioning and outcomes measurement.
- The scope and duration of funding contracts.
- The advantages of a joined-up approach between different levels of government and the community sector in the delivery of ER.

The NCG evaluation found that the NCG was an example of successful collaborative governance and had achieved its stated purpose. The collaborative governance model was valued by NCG members, DSS and other stakeholders. There is support for the wider use of collaborative governance, which, in the future, can deliver benefits such as:

- The development of high-quality advice regarding cross-sector programs.
- Open communication and data sharing across the relevant sector, between governments and with providers.
- An increase in levels of trust between the different tiers of government and providers.

The outcome of the NCG's work was that ER Providers have had sufficient funding to meet demand, particularly those who are supporting Temporary Visa holders, identified as the cohort in most need of ER support during the COVID-19 pandemic. A further outcome is that the Minister and DSS have been provided with high quality advice to use in the development of Australian Government policy for ER.

### **Patrick McKenna**

NATIONAL COORDINATOR, COVID-19  
EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM

EMERGENCY RELIEF SUPPORT NATIONAL  
COORDINATION GROUP – CORONAVIRUS  
AND BEYOND

# Drought Report

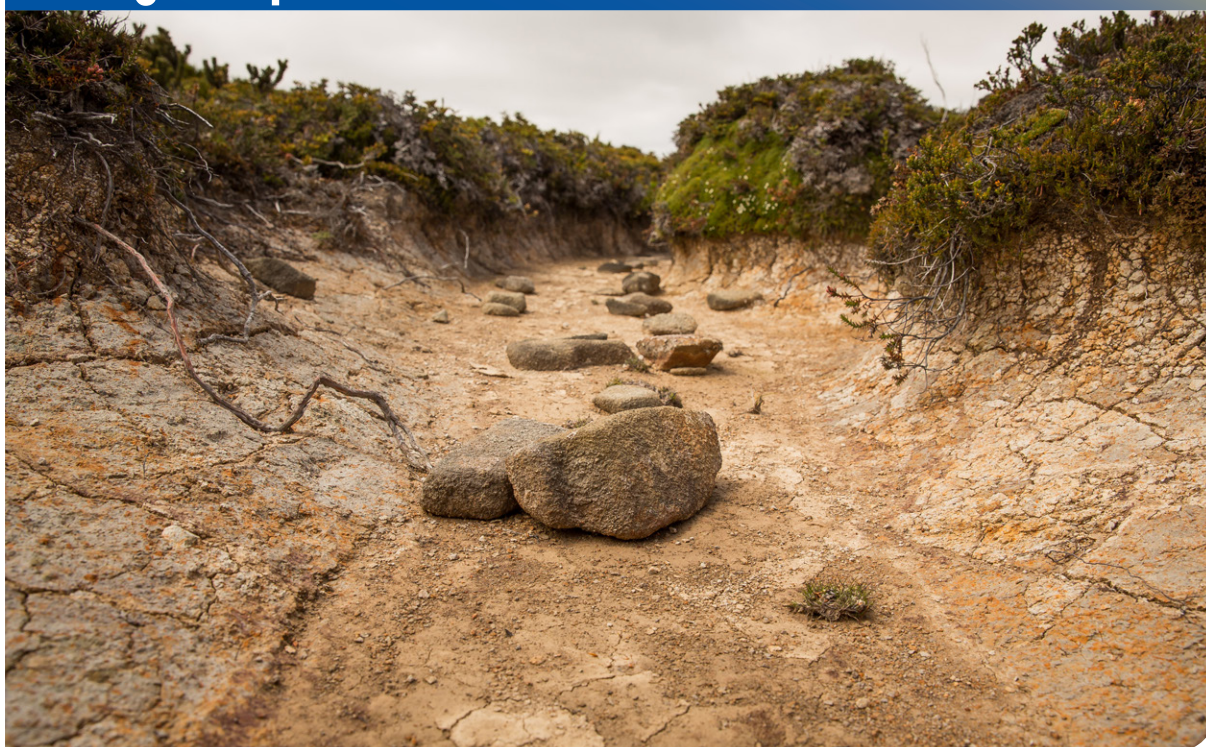


Photo by Matt Palmer on Unsplash

## Drought Team

The Drought Team was brought together by the St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council Secretariat to deliver the Drought Community Support Initiative funding on behalf of the Australian Government. The team was tasked with developing relationships with 117 drought declared Local Government Areas and encouraging local farming communities to apply for the DSCI Round 2 funding, as well as referring farming households to additional internal and external drought assistance pathways as needed.

It was based at the National Secretariat office in Canberra and concluded its work at the end of financial year 2020-2021. The Team received valuable support from the Society's members, volunteers and staff in many locations.

Sincere appreciation is extended to everyone who contributed to the success of this project. Special thanks to:

|                   |                  |                    |   |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---|
| Ane van Wyk       | Hanne Patton     | Luigi D'Ambrosio   | Sally Babbage                             |
| Breanna Reynold   | Ingrid Schodde   | Marion Grantham    | Sarah Bucknell                            |
| Briana Secko      | Jacob Gallagher  | Mary Anne Fletcher | Sophie Rainbow                            |
| Bryce Taotua      | Jane Phillips    | Maureen Galvin     | Sue May                                   |
| Carmel Trigwell   | Jennifer Job     | Megan Finnigan     | Suzan Secko                               |
| Catherine Vonarx  | Jessica Keyser   | Merah Hashmi       | The staff of National Council Secretariat |
| Chris Evans       | Juliett Forward  | Michael Riley      | Drought Steering Committee                |
| Desne Stevens     | Kate-Anne Warren | Nell Feneck        | Drought Coordinators                      |
| Dianne Pentland   | Kay Barby        | Ngairé McCubben    | from each of the States and Territories.  |
| Elizabeth Doughty | Lea Edwards      | Oliver Titulaer    |   |
| Fran Neuss        | Linda Holt       | Philippa Callan    |   |



# Drought Report

## ◀ Australian Government's Drought Community Support Initiative, Round 2 (DCSI 2) Project

The Australian Government's Drought Community Support Initiative, Round 2 (DCSI 2) project was reintroduced in November 2019 to help drought declared Local Government Areas (LGAs) with immediate assistance for farmers, farm workers and farm suppliers/contractors. Whilst the funding was designed to ensure farming communities were provided a hand up during the ongoing drought, it was also anticipated that the DCSI 2 funding would improve levels of economic activity in regions and support local communities.

As DCSI 2 was the first large-scale assistance project that the National Secretariat had been involved in, this particular project has given National Council many successes as well as lessons of opportunity to consider for any future administration of such large-scale Government Grants.

At its completion the DCSI 2 project had been successfully administered by the Society across Australia in 117 LGAs that were declared eligible for the Australian Government's Drought Communities Programme (DCP) Extension. From 1 May 2021, the Society's scope of support included all LGAs announced as eligible for the DCP Extension in January 2020, including those previously supported by The Salvation Army. All DCSI 2 funding was exhausted on 30 June 2021.

Overall, the DCSI 2 project was a success, with the Society assisting 20,000 farming households, to the value of \$60 million. Additional internal funds were also distributed to those households facing considerable hardship, or who didn't meet the government eligibility criteria set for the DCSI 2 project. As the project extended from 2019 – 2021, some households were assisted not only with DCSI 2 funds but Society funds as well, as the prolonged drought conditions remained.

An Australian National University research report into the delivery of DCSI 2 was also commissioned and its working paper is available upon request. The research gives a great understanding into the necessity of payments such as DCSI 2, as well as insights from those who received the grant:

*'We received our payment the other day. I cannot express how truly grateful we are for this support. Thank you so much from all our family. This money makes it easier for us to pay school fees and all the expenses that come with traveling long distances to get our children to school. Praying for rain to end this drought for everyone.'* 17 January 2020, NSW.

*'The Drought has affected us financially in a huge way with credit card debt reaching maximum and over 80% of the limited income going on feed, water and medical costs for the livestock. As the drought has been going on for so long, breeding has all but ceased so income from the livestock has ceased as well. The local fire threats also add the emotional and mental stresses that face us at this time.'* January 2020, NSW.

Overall, the Society delivered on the project's expectation that the National Drought Relief Team would effectively centrally manage project delivery and that the Society would build on its community profile within the identified eligible LGAs, responding to the local needs of the farming communities.

The project also successfully ensured that farmers, farm workers and farm suppliers/contractors living or working in the identified LGAs would have greater awareness of what drought assistance available to them. This was achieved by extensive Community Outreach, prompt processing of the \$3,000 cash payments to households that met the eligibility criteria, as well as referrals to other service providers, including the Rural Financial Counselling Service and FarmHub, to ensure all households received the relevant support.

This project was measured and supported by robust monitoring and evaluation that has allowed key learnings to be identified and shared throughout the project. As part of the project a Drought Relief Application System (DRAS) was developed to host the incoming applications. This was used as a mechanism for processing the approvals and payments and for efficient timely reporting. The DRAS is an effective overarching Disaster management system that should be considered should the Society participate in any future disaster relief projects and remains a viable resource beyond the DCSI 2 project.

Overall, The DCSI 2 project should be considered a great success for the Society and its ability to support regional and remote communities in need.

Many thanks must go to all the members, volunteers and staff who supported the DCSI 2 project, including the many local conferences and especially the State/Territory Drought Coordinators who were fundamental to the success of the project.

**Cassandra Bull**  
NATIONAL MANAGER DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM



# Overseas Development Program

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia continues to support fellow Vincentians to undertake good works in our partnered countries in the Asia-Pacific region through Twinning, Project Support, the Assist-a-Student (AAS) Program and, as needed, in response to Emergencies.

Good works at the Conference and Council level are supported and overseen through relationships between the Australian and National Councils in our overseas partner countries of Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, one of the four states in the FSM), India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

## Twining

Twining is the direct link between an Australian and an Overseas Conference or Council. It promotes spirituality, friendship and an understanding between cultures, and consists of prayer, regular communication and financial support.

Under the Twinning program, there were 1,023 Conferences and 37 Councils in Australia that supported overseas twins as at the end of the financial year 2020-2021. Of these 1,060 twins, 515 Conferences and 10 Councils supported more than one twin. The highest number of twins was 10 with the average number being close to 2.

A total of 1,911 twins were supported by conferences. The State and Territories breakdown was: Canberra/Goulburn (79), New South Wales (700), Queensland and Northern Territory (312), South Australia (130), Tasmania (36), Victoria (531) and Western Australia (112).

|                                      | Conference to<br>Conference<br>twins | Council to<br>Council twins | Total       | % by<br>Country | No. Grants<br>Given | % Grants<br>given |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Cambodia                             | 19                                   |                             | 19          | 1%              | 11                  | 1%                |
| Federated<br>States of<br>Micronesia | 1                                    |                             | 1           | 0%              | 1                   | 0%                |
| India                                | 1191                                 | 23                          | 1214        | 62%             | 609                 | 58%               |
| Indonesia                            | 226                                  | 3                           | 229         | 12%             | 89                  | 9%                |
| Kiribati                             | 1                                    |                             | 1           | 0%              |                     | 0%                |
| Laos                                 | 1                                    |                             | 1           | 0%              | 1                   | 0%                |
| Myanmar                              | 101                                  | 12                          | 113         | 6%              | 91                  | 9%                |
| Philippines                          | 237                                  | 7                           | 244         | 12%             | 157                 | 15%               |
| Solomon<br>Islands                   | 7                                    |                             | 7           | 0%              | 2                   | 0%                |
| Sri Lanka                            | 4                                    | 3                           | 7           | 0%              | 4                   | 0%                |
| Thailand                             | 123                                  | 4                           | 127         | 6%              | 79                  | 8%                |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>1911</b>                          | <b>52</b>                   | <b>1963</b> | <b>100%</b>     | <b>1044</b>         | <b>100%</b>       |

# Overseas Development Program

## Project Support

Conferences and Councils in our overseas partner countries can request support from their Australian twin through their National Council for a project to address a specific need in their area.

A total of 48 Projects were funded in 2020-2021. These were in Cambodia (1), India (13), Indonesia (2), Kiribati (2), Myanmar (20), Philippines (2), Solomon Islands (4), Sri Lanka (3) and Thailand (1).

In 2020-2021, 46 small projects were funded. These included:

- Primary school repair in Cambodia
- Community Wellness Garden – COVID-19 Relief in Philippines
- Small business revolving loan in India
- COVID-19 relief in Indonesia
- Fishing gear loan in Kiribati
- Pig project in Myanmar
- Training and agricultural support in Solomon Islands
- Self-employment Small Business in Sri Lanka.

Two large projects were also funded this past year. Firstly, the Vidial Arul Avai Naduvam (VAAN) Project in Tamil Nadu, India was funded to support the building of a “help desk” centre near the government hospital to provide services to disadvantaged patients, including support for registration, making appointments, accessing services and providing short stay accommodation for care-takers and patients.

In addition, the Society in Thailand was able to assist Christian Pakistani refugee families through the Pakistani Refugee Relief Project 2 funded by the Society in Australia. The refugees fled to Thailand for protection after facing religious discrimination in Pakistan.

## Emergencies

Over the financial year, during the COVID-19 emergency, Vincentians in Australia supported their overseas partners in two ways. Firstly, individual conferences and councils were able to provide grants of AUD200 to their twin. In addition, they were able to provide support to our overseas National Councils who could then distribute to un-twinned conferences according to need.

In 2020-2021, \$40,000 was also provided to the Philippines for the Tulay sa Pagbangon (Bridge to Recovery) Typhoon Relief Project.



## Assist-a-Student Program

Unique to Australia, the Assist-a-Student (AAS) Program recognises the importance of education as one of the key planks to help break the cycle of poverty. The National Council commissioned a Review of the AAS Program, which was completed in late 2019. The implementation of some of the recommendations was deferred because of the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. These will be introduced in the current financial year.

### AAS STUDENTS SUPPORTED AND FUNDS EXPENDED

The AAS Program currently runs over a calendar year. In addition, the countries engaged in the program run different school years so payments are made at different times in the year. This makes financial year reporting a challenge.

Following is a breakdown of payments made in the calendar years related to this financial year period. In line with the review of the AAS program, payments were increased from \$70 to \$100 per student in the 2021 year.

In the 2020 calendar year, 2,400 students were supported with \$70 allocated for each student for a total amount of \$168,440. Of this, \$108,940 was funded in the 2020-2021 financial year. These students came from Cambodia (152)\*, Indonesia (300)\*, Kiribati (100)\*, Myanmar (300), Philippines (550)\*, Sri Lanka (550) and Thailand (450)\*.

In the 2021 calendar year, 1,470 students were or will be supported with \$100 allocated for each student for a total amount of \$147,000. Of this, \$45,000 was funded in the 2020-2021 financial year. These students are from Cambodia (150), Indonesia (250), Kiribati (100), Myanmar (250)\*, Philippines (285), Sri Lanka (200)\* and Thailand (235).

(\*supported in the 2020-2021 financial year)

## AAS FUNDS EXPENDED OVER FINANCIAL YEAR 2020-2021

Funds expended for AAS in the 2020-2021 financial year totalled \$153,940. This covers students supported over two calendar years (\$108,940 in 2020) and (\$45,000 in 2021).

### Total Funds Provided by Country

The table below summarises the Twinning, Grants, Project and Assist-a-Student funds provided to overseas National Councils through the overseas development program in 2020-2021 financial year.

**Tricia Wilden**

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
FACILITATOR

| Funds remitted by Overseas Development Program in 2020-2021 financial year |                  |  |                        |  |                      |                    |
|--|------------------|--|------------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|
|  | Twinning         | Grants<br>Christmas/<br>Easter/<br>COVID | Council-<br>to-Council | Projects,<br>Emergency<br>& COVID<br>support | Assist-a-<br>Student | Total              |
| Cambodia   | \$6,080          | \$3,319                                  | -                      | \$2,701                                      | \$10,640             | <b>\$22,740</b>    |
| FSM (Chuuk)  | \$320            | \$182                                    | -                      | -  | -                    | <b>\$502</b>       |
| India  | \$375,520        | \$179,471                                | \$17,920               | \$106,519                                    | -                    | <b>\$679,430</b>   |
| Indonesia  | \$68,640         | \$24,906                                 | \$3,640                | \$2,218                                      | \$21,000             | <b>\$120,404</b>   |
| Kiribati   | \$400            | -  | -                      | \$5,889                                      | \$7,300              | <b>\$13,589</b>    |
| Lao PDR  | \$480            | \$81                                     | -                      | -  | -                    | <b>\$561</b>       |
| Myanmar  | \$31,280         | \$28,061                                 | \$14,800               | \$50,149                                     | \$25,000             | <b>\$149,290</b>   |
| Philippines  | \$73,200         | \$39,986                                 | \$7,480                | \$44,850                                     | \$38,500             | <b>\$204,016</b>   |
| Solomon Islands  | \$1,120          | \$400                                    |                        | \$6,200                                      |                      | <b>\$7,720</b>     |
| Sri Lanka  | \$1,280          | \$927                                    | \$2,400                | \$11,562                                     | \$20,000             | <b>\$36,169</b>    |
| Thailand   | \$38,480         | \$16,316                                 | \$5,300                | \$40,000                                     | \$31,500             | <b>\$131,596</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$596,800</b> | <b>\$293,649</b>                         | <b>\$51,540</b>        | <b>\$270,088</b>                             | <b>\$153,940</b>     | <b>\$1,366,017</b> |



# National Communications Report



Public policy advocacy is a major focus of the St Vincent de Paul National Council and its Secretariat. Central to that focus is an effective and strategic, coordinated, and collaborative approach to communications across the Society in Australia.

The National Council Secretariat produces submissions, discussion and position papers along with regular national publications, which include four issues of *The Record*, the *National Overview*, and a regular electronic newsletter.

The National Council Secretariat, on behalf of National Council, engages with major metropolitan media outlets; Catholic media; the federal press gallery, Parliament House Canberra; relevant federal politicians and their staff and Commonwealth departments; other peak Not-for-Profit organisations, including Australia's major charities and research institutes and universities.

National Council participates in national campaigns, such as those facilitated by ACOSS; a limited number of 'themed weeks' each year; and celebrates significant dates in the Vincentian calendar.

The work of National Council conducted by the Secretariat is wide-ranging. Communications and participation in public discourse is guided by the National Council's Strategic Plan and informed by the work of the Society's members, volunteers and employees drawn from across the states and territories.

## *Media Releases*

The year under review saw the publication of 54 media releases and a significant number of opinion pieces and speeches on issues including housing and homelessness, income support, asylum seekers and refugees, racism, structural causes of poverty and inequality, natural disaster responses, affordable energy and a range of environmental issues, Plenary Council, National Indigenous Voice and Reconciliation more broadly, volunteering, youth, proposed charity law changes, fair work, and forced labour.

## *Media Liaison*

Both the National President Claire Victory and the CEO Toby oConnor responded to requests for interviews from mainstream media outlets including ABC Radio National, *The Australian* and other major newspapers, and regular chats on 2GB's Sunday Nights with Rev Bill Crews.





## Publications

**eNewsletter:** An update from the National Council. Regular electronic updates about the work being conducted by National Council were distributed to national, state and territory presidents and their councils, CEOs and their staff.

**The Record:** The National Council's magazine celebrates the work of members and volunteers across all states and territories. The publication focuses on the National Council's social policy advocacy; Vincentian spirituality; developments in governance; leadership; and the sustainability of the organisation.

**National Overview:** Annual update on the work of the National Council and its Secretariat, including national statistics and financial statements.

## Media Monitoring

The National Council holds the national contract with Isentia Media. The National Council's Secretariat distributes a daily media clippings summary across the Society.

## National Communications Network

The first meeting of the National Communications Network was held in February 2021. The Network was established to streamline and strengthen our approach to help manage the multiple demands on time and other resources across the Society. The Network is made up of senior communications staff from each of the jurisdictions and meets every two months to engage on issues of national significance, including a brief from each jurisdiction on relevant activities.

The work of the National Communications Network has a broad, strategic focus on advancing a more just society for people facing disadvantage or social exclusion.

The National Communications Network works to deliver the following outcomes:-

- Coordinate the media and communications work across SVDP jurisdictions, including states, territories and National Council.
- Separate and streamline the functions of the National Communications Network and the National Marketing and Fundraising Working Group.
- Ensure consistent public/media messaging across SVDP jurisdictions, including states and territories, and National Council.
- Ensure effective distribution of communications, including media releases and publications, shared throughout the Network to ensure consistent messaging.
- Establish consensus on national communication-related contracts, including media monitoring and copyright.
- Facilitate regular meetings.

There are rich resources to be shared. Stories from 'the coalface' strengthen advocacy on national issues.

## Staff

The period under review saw the appointment of Robin Osborne to the position of National Publications Officer. He oversees the production of The Record and the Annual Overview.

**Judith Tokley**  
NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

# National Statement of Comprehensive Income 2020-21

The Society's financial accounting is done primarily at the State and Territory level, where the various incorporated entities function. This statement presents an amalgamated financial view of these entities.

|  | Revenue<br>\$m | Operating Expenses<br>\$m | Net surplus/(deficit)<br>\$m |
|--|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>  |                |                           |                              |
| Aged Care  | 175.0          | 181.0                     | (6.0)                        |
| Community Housing  | 27.4           | 24.6                      | 2.8                          |
| Disability Services  | 17.9           | 24.5                      | (6.6)                        |
| Help for People in Crisis  | 24.2           | 59.4                      | (35.2)                       |
| Home assist services   | 134.4          | 105.3                     | 29.1                         |
| Homeless Services  | 97.2           | 80.3                      | 16.9                         |
| Accommodation and Support Services   | 48.5           | 50.9                      | (2.4)                        |
| Migrants and Refugees  | 0.5            | 1.2                       | (0.7)                        |
| Drought Disaster Recovery and Relief                                       | 39.7           | 38.5                      | 1.2                          |
| Other Natural Disaster Recovery and Relief                                 | 7.6            | 9.9                       | (2.3)                        |
| Overseas Development   | 1.4            | 1.7                       | (0.3)                        |
| Youth Services   | 0.3            | 1.6                       | (1.3)                        |
| <b>Total Community Services</b>  | <b>574.1</b>   | <b>578.9</b>              | <b>(4.8)</b>                 |
| <b>SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>   |                |                           |                              |
| Fundraising  | 54.0           | 10.3                      | 43.7                         |
| Operational Support Services   | 13.6           | 26.9                      | (13.3)                       |
| Retail Operations  | 205.6          | 132.3                     | 73.3                         |
| <b>Total Supporting Services</b>   | <b>273.2</b>   | <b>169.5</b>              | <b>103.7</b>                 |
| <b>SHARED SERVICES</b>   |                |                           |                              |
| Management and Administration Services                                     | 23.6           | 11.2                      | 12.4                         |
| Finance Services   | 13.0           | 12.4                      | 0.6                          |
| Human Resource Services  | 0.1            | 7.8                       | (7.7)                        |
| Information & Communications Technology Services                           | 0.0            | 17.3                      | (17.3)                       |
| Legal and Compliance Services  | 0.1            | 3.3                       | (3.2)                        |
| <b>Total Shared Services</b>   | <b>36.8</b>    | <b>52.0</b>               | <b>(15.2)</b>                |
| <b>OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>  |                |                           |                              |
| Reclassification adjustment on sale of available for sale financial assets | -              | 2.4                       | (2.4)                        |
| Net changes in fair value of available for sale financial assets           | 20.1           | 0.0                       | 20.1                         |
| <b>Total other comprehensive income for the year</b>                       | <b>20.1</b>    | <b>2.4</b>                | <b>17.7</b>                  |
| <b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>                             | <b>904.2</b>   | <b>802.8</b>              | <b>101.4</b>                 |





**St Vincent de Paul Society**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

Responsibility for this document rests with the  
St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia Inc.

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#### **PRIVACY STATEMENT**

The St Vincent de Paul Society of Australia respects the privacy of the people it assists, our members, volunteers and employees. As a result, the names of clients, members, volunteers or employees featured in this report may have been changed and pictorial models used.

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