



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

2018–19 NATIONAL OVERVIEW



OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

The 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, and 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.

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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 practices, 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, 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 in Australia wishes to acknowledge that we are on Aboriginal Land.
We pay respects to all traditional custodians.*

President's Address

My vision for the National Council includes stronger advocacy on the issues that affect the people we serve and a greater focus on meeting the needs of the Members who work in Conferences in local communities around Australia.

Members work at the coalface, connecting with people who need a hand up from time-to-time. They know and understand their local communities intimately and they embody the Society's mission.

The National Council brings that valuable insight and wisdom to the table in its national policy advocacy. Our Members' work informs our approach to significant national issues.

One of the biggest ongoing challenges facing people in rural and remote areas is the deepening drought. Individuals, families and indeed whole communities have been pushed beyond optimism and hope as they try to stare down another shocking year. The Society has been directly involved in rolling out drought assistance in various states and has also provided support to people in rural communities through counselling, financial relief and other practical support, including referral to relevant services. Our Conferences in local communities are well placed to identify people who are struggling and to offer support.

In June this year, I contributed to the Ozanam conversation in Melbourne, where I was able to describe my experience of faith and church post the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and other significant events.

Those revelations shocked and angered me but they do not challenge my faith or my relationship with the Church because those elements in which we have seen such deficiencies – those individuals, that hierarchy, that structure – have never been or defined the Church or what it is to be Catholic for me.

As I was growing up, the Church was a community of hundreds of people in which I was happy and comfortable and where I was always able to play a role, and it was where I found my purpose in life – to volunteer my time and to help people and serve my community.

The leaders were the pastoral associates, the mums who started the children's liturgies in our parish, St Vincent de Paul volunteers, Mini Vinnies who

raised funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society, and the dedicated parish and archdiocesan youth workers.

Leadership in the Church to me is, and always has been, people – women, men, couples, singles, kids and teenagers – serving their community, inspired by their faith, doing their little bit to help that community to function and to flourish.

As National President, the role I commenced in March 2019, my community has just expanded significantly.

One of our strengths as the National Council is our ability to speak with one voice on behalf of the Society on national issues like inadequate Newstart and the impact it is having on some of our most vulnerable people, issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers, social security legislation and so on.

To do this effectively we must ensure our governance structures are more than functional – that they are capable of delivering on our mandate to serve people experiencing poverty.

To that end the National Council has commenced a fresh look at the Society's complex governance structures, through a contemporary lens with a commitment to solid governance principles including transparency and accountability.

The Society is also well on the way to participating as a single, national entity in the National Redress Scheme, established by the Federal Government following the Royal Commission. The process has taken 18 months, but each Council, through the National Council, is committed to ensuring that people who may have been abused have access to the same justice and dignity afforded others abused in Australian institutions.

There is a lot of work to do and I hope you will share my optimism for the year ahead.

Claire Victory
NATIONAL PRESIDENT



As I was growing up, the Church was a community of hundreds of people... it was where I found my purpose in life – to volunteer my time and to help people and serve my community

CEO's Report

A key feature that characterises the Vincentian family is the commitment of individuals to striving to live their daily lives with an outward focus on charity which is demonstrated by their participation in works and activities that bear witness to the love of Christ.

In a busy world that is frequently bombarded by questionable offerings posted on 'hip social media', Vincentians quietly go about their business in practical ways that give a 'hand up' to people who are living with poverty or are in any way distressed. The hand up offered by our members, by our volunteers and through our employees at the local community level offers a beacon that shines the Society's presence in the world.

One of the functions of the National Council is to 'animate and co-ordinate the activities of the Society in Australia' (*The Rule*, Part III, Article 16) and in so doing the National Council seeks to help all Vincentians be the beacons of hope in their community.

In fulfilling this function, the National Council works in collaboration with state and territory councils to represent the Society to religious and civic authorities especially through advocating for a fairer Australia, to work for greater unity to bring about One Society and, to set the strategic vision of the Society in Australia.

The premise for this collaboration is the understanding of subsidiarity, a Catholic Social Teaching concept that was influenced by the approach Frederic Ozanam brought from his experience of encouraging

The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbour in need.

The Rule, Part I, Article 3.1

a growing number of those people he inspired to join his quest for social justice. Today we encourage subsidiarity as a way of empowering people who wish to give practical expression of their faith as Members of the St Vincent de Paul Society. And a yearning to be a better leader who serves through example; listening and discerning in order to arrive at decisions that are in the best interest of the people the Society serves.

The National Council and all councils in Australia have an obligation to share resources with developing countries in the region. This period saw the national councils from Pacific nations come together to discuss good governance and new legislative requirements from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission that are applicable to the transfers of monies overseas from July 2019.

As the new Chief Executive Officer, I am mindful of the responsibilities entrusted by the National Council to National Secretariat employees whose work is to support, facilitate and implement the decisions of the National Council. The process of equipping the National Secretariat so it has the capacity and the ability to meet the expectations that accompany the forward agenda of a new National President is in train at the time of writing. These elements will allow the National Council to continue its social justice and advocacy work from an informed base and to assist it prepare

strategic and comprehensive responses to the feedback from Members gathered during the 2017 National Congress.

On behalf of the National Council I take this opportunity to thank all our Members for their tireless work advocating for a fairer Australia and for continuing to provide a hand up to so many people in Australia who face the impact of poverty brought about by an increasing number of circumstances. To our donors and partners, I say "Thank you". The Society could not continue to do its good works across the nation without your ongoing support and commitment to bring about our mission.

The coming year brings a new challenge for the Society as many of our leaders adopt a hardening of their hearts at a time when more people are finding the 'fair go' slipping beyond their reach. Let us be clear that we all have a part to play *in creating a more equitable world*.

Toby oConnor
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



National Council Members

The names of the National Council Members in office at any time during, or since the end of, the financial year ended 30 June 2019 are:

Graham West President to March 2019	Resigned March 2019
Claire Victory President from March 2019	Appointed May 2011
Francis Brassil Treasurer	Resigned July 2019
Fr Troy Bobbin Spiritual Adviser	Resigned March 2019
Catherine Beaton State President SA	Effective May 2017
Denis Walsh State President NSW	Elected December 2015
Fay Gurr Territory President NT	Appointed September 2016
Toni Muir State President TAS	Resigned November 2018
Warwick Fulton Deputy President from March 2019	Elected March 2016
Cathryn Moore National Youth Representative	Resigned March 2019
Patrick Garcia Vice President	Resigned March 2019
Rick Stankiewicz Vice President	Resigned March 2019
Brian Spencer Secretary	Resigned March 2019
Dennis Innes State President QLD	Effective June 2018
Gladys Demissie State President WA	Effective July 2018
Kevin McMahon State President VIC	Effective March 2018
Mark Gaetani State President TAS	Effective January 2019
Kate Barton Vice President	Appointed April 2019/ Resigned June 2019
John Feint Territory President Canberra-Goulburn	Elected June 2019
Ryan Erlandsen Secretary	Appointed June 2019
Patrick Wallis Vice President	Appointed June 2019
Maurice Ryan Vice President	Appointed June 2019
Sr Therese Haywood Spiritual Advisor	Appointed June 2019

National Secretariat Staff

CEO

Toby oConnor, incoming

CEO

Dr John Falzon, outgoing

Executive Officer

Donna Scheerlinck

National Manager, Strategic Marketing

Anneloes de Graeff

Senior National Marketing Coordinator

Catherine Braybon

National Digital Marketing Specialist

Samara Gentle

Communications Advisor

Colleen O'Sullivan

Media & Communications Adviser

Judith Tokley

National Senior Manager Web & Digital

Vincent Nguyen Cuu

National Director Policy & Research

Corinne Dobson

Overseas Development Program Facilitator

Jude Blacklock

National Strategy & Projects Manager

Elizabeth Heath

Administration Support Officer

Gregory Caruso

Volunteer Archivist

Michael Moran

Volunteer Archivist

Andrew Herscovitch

Volunteer Website Advisor

Dr Tikka Wilson

National Statistics

National Council Office

11 Employees
3 Volunteers

Canberra/Goulburn

644 Members
160 Employees
1,700 Volunteers
51 Conferences
27 Centres

New South Wales

4,554 Members
2,000 Employees
9,625 Volunteers
426 Conferences
237 Centres

Northern Territory

51 Members
34 Employees
298 Volunteers
5 Conferences
10 Centres

Queensland

2,828 Members
424 Employees
6,098 Volunteers
204 Conferences
153 Centres

South Australia

824 Members
81 Employees
899 Volunteers
61 Conferences
1,195 Centres

Tasmania

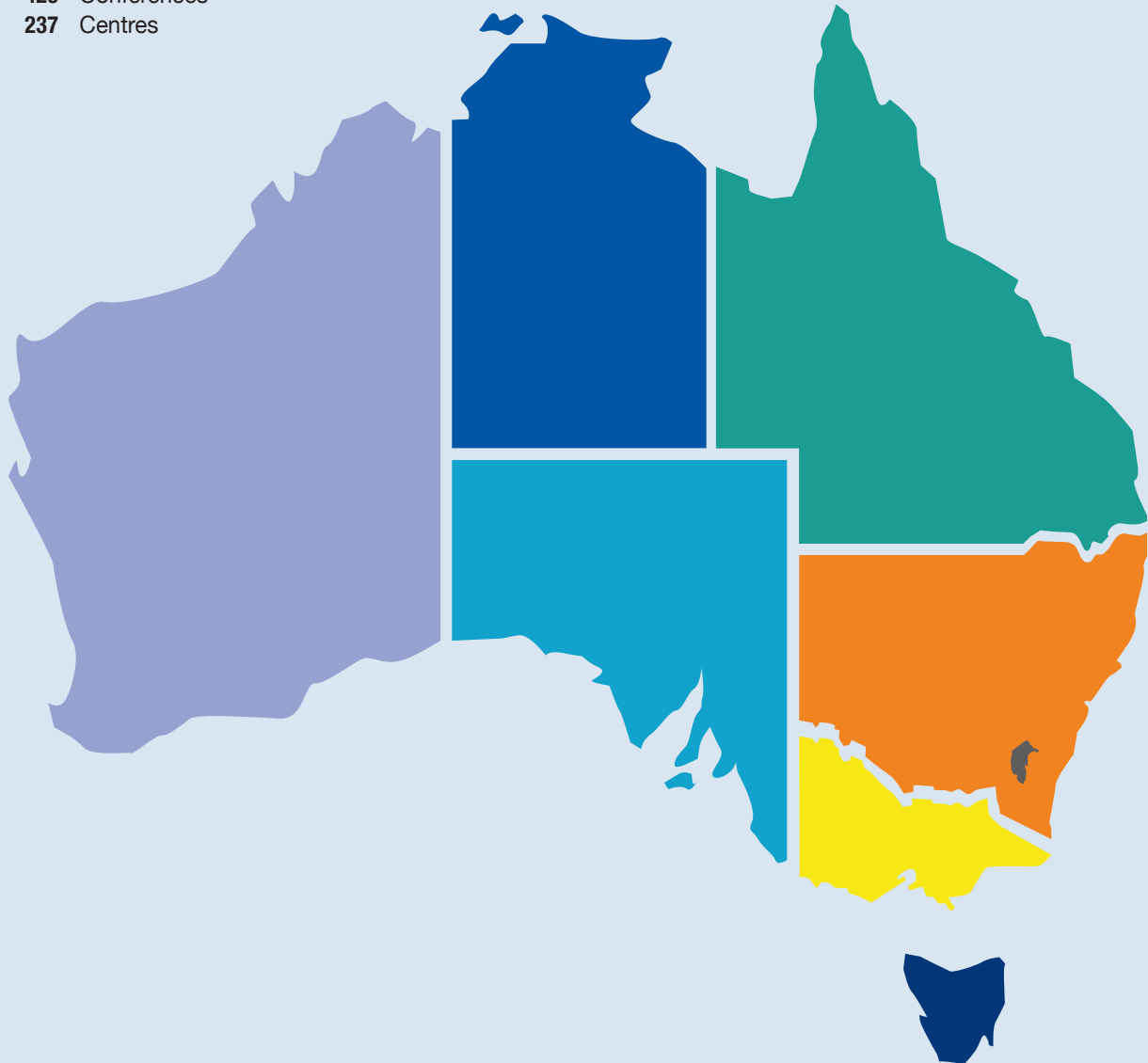
279 Members
129 Employees
1,235 Volunteers
28 Conferences
37 Centres

Victoria

4,306 Members
373 Employees
7,345 Volunteers
275 Conferences
110 Centres

Western Australia

1,070 Members
192 Employees
2,720 Volunteers
75 Conferences
54 Centres



Adequate Newstart

Throughout the year, the Society has continued to advocate for an increase to Newstart, Youth Allowance and other related payments. While the Society's Conferences and National Council have been actively engaging their local communities, Members of Parliament and ministers on this issue, the call to increase payments and assist long-term unemployed people is not new.

A Moral Accord

In 1993, the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission issued *A Moral Accord* with people who are long-term unemployed. This action was taken in recognition of the value of meaningful employment to the character of the individual and the adverse effects long-term unemployment has on the social and economic wellbeing of the individual, families and society.¹

A Moral Accord affirms that each of us has 'an equal human dignity'. It calls on all Australians, including government, employers, trade unions and churches to take responsibility for addressing long-term unemployment. The principles are based on respect for the human dignity of every person and the interests of the common good of the community.

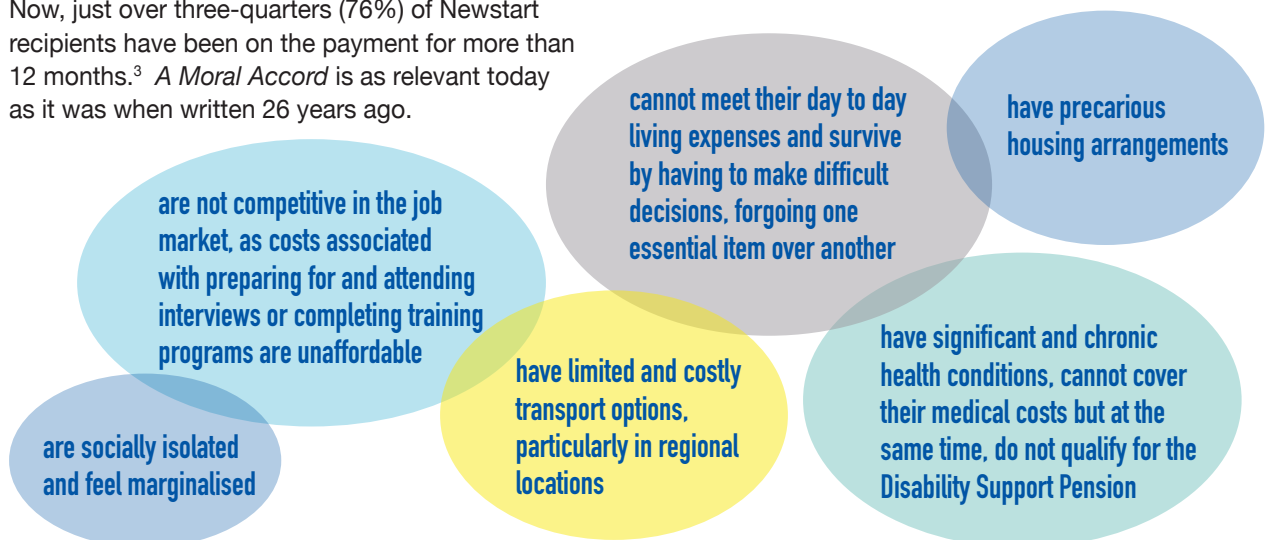
Since *A Moral Accord* was written, no progress has been made to help people who are long-term unemployed. In fact, the situation has worsened. During the 1990s, a quarter to a third of people unemployed had been so for 12 months or more.² Now, just over three-quarters (76%) of Newstart recipients have been on the payment for more than 12 months.³ *A Moral Accord* is as relevant today as it was when written 26 years ago.

The seven moral commitments include:

- giving a guarantee of support for all members of the Australian community in need;
- promising justice and not charity;
- persevering in responding to need;
- sharing and allocating resources according to need;
- changing any community attitudes and language that demean people;
- not excluding unemployed people from any aspects of community life; and
- acknowledging unemployment as impacting on family life.

Feedback from Conference Members

Conference Members have been walking alongside people on Newstart and other income support allowances for many years, providing material and emotional support to ensure those people most in need are afforded the necessities of life. They have been listening to people, respecting their wishes and helping them to recover their dignity. In this last year, Conference Members have witnessed the extreme financial and emotional stress faced by people trying to live on Newstart and report that people on Newstart:



¹ Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission. (1993). *A Moral Accord with people who are long term unemployed*. September 1993. Vol.2., No., 3.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2000). *Australian Social Trends, 2000*. Catalogue no. 4102.0. Accessed at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/dbb10aa47793b08bca2570ec000e4152!OpenDocument>

³ Australian Government. Department of Social Services, DSS Payment Demographic Data. December 2018. Accessed at: <https://data.gov.au/data/organization/departments-of-social-services>

Work first, not life first approach

The Australian Government's approach to Newstart recipients is, first and foremost, a work first approach. This fails to deal with people individually or to recognise their inherent capacities or the circumstances in which they live. It ignores the nature of disadvantage and its relationship to workforce exclusion by reducing unemployment to a simple matter of labour market supply and demand. Immediate economic productivity and exit from welfare are valued over sustainable attachment to quality jobs.⁴

The work first approach assumes a 'level playing field', whereby all unemployed people can obtain work if they are incentivised to do so. This 'one size fits all' approach does not recognise the barriers to employment that exist, particularly for young people, old people, those with disability and those in regional communities;⁵ or that social disadvantage also affects job seekers' ability to retain employment.⁶

International⁷ and Australian research has found that a 'life first' approach to unemployment works best. It recognises the importance of quality employment with long-term support. It focuses on building the capability of the unemployed person by identifying their strengths, aspirations and preferences, and recognising their circumstances and connection to family and local community. Importantly, it supports the person's agency to determine their own pathways, with appropriate support.⁸

These principles align closely with the values of the St Vincent de Paul Society and we know this approach works. For example, the more time spent with people in need initially, significantly reduces further requests for assistance by 25%.⁹



The damaging political discourse

Of particular concern to the Society is the political rhetoric that negatively stereotypes people on Newstart. This includes views such as 'people on Newstart don't want to work', 'if Newstart is increased, the money will go on drugs and alcohol' and 'Newstart needs to be low because it is transitional, and people need to be incentivised to look for work'. These stereotypes are pervasive and commonly used in the political discourse and repeated in the media to justify the Australian Government's current social policy agenda. There has also been a hardening of political attitudes since the 1990s, with the general approach being to blame people and their attitudes, rather than focusing on the need to improve training options, create jobs and provide support services.

A four-year, mixed-methods study by the University of Queensland has found no evidence that unemployed people do not want to work. Many unemployed people want to find suitable employment and are spending a lot of time and effort doing so but there are significant barriers. The reality is that the inadequacy of Newstart means financial hardship and just trying to survive is difficult. In addition, the mutual obligations that must be met are, in themselves, a full-time job.

Most troubling is the social stigma and shame felt by unemployed people, which have a corrosive effect on their social and emotional wellbeing and negatively impact on their ability to search for jobs. Being unemployed also has a significant impact on mental health, with many people reporting feelings of anxiety, depression and worthlessness.

4 Goodwin-Smith I., Hutchinson, C., (2014). *Beyond supply and demand: addressing the complexities of workforce exclusion in Australia*. Flinders University, South Australia. Commissioned by Anglicare Australia. Accessed at: <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/beyond-supply-and-demand.pdf?sfvrsn=10>

5 Anglicare Australia. (2014). More jobs, not just job applications. Media Release. 28 July 2014. Accessed at: <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/more-jobs-not-just-job-applications.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

6 Goodwin-Smith I., Hutchinson, C., (2014). *Beyond supply and demand: addressing the complexities of workforce exclusion in Australia*. Flinders University, South Australia. Commissioned by Anglicare Australia. Accessed at: <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/beyond-supply-and-demand.pdf?sfvrsn=10>. P.5.

7 Refer to the work in the UK by Hollywood, Edgell & McQuaid 2012.

8 Goodwin-Smith I., Hutchinson, C., op. cit.

9 Ambrey, C., Parsell, C., Spallek, M., Robinson, R., (2017). *SOL Data Analysis Report: Taking time to disrupt dependency on emergency relief assistance*, Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland. Commissioned by St Vincent de Paul Queensland.



Many people report feeling that others are ‘looking down on them’, ‘judging’ and ‘blaming’ them for the situation they are in. Unemployed people are spending a lot of time trying to manage their emotions, maintaining a degree of good mental health and being positive so that they can present well to employers. It seems that the overwhelming social messaging with being unemployed is one of moral failure. Consequently, unemployed people end up withdrawing from social circles to protect their dignity and emotional wellbeing. And yet, these are the very networks that are important to finding jobs.¹⁰

With respect to drug and alcohol use, around half of Newstart recipients are aged 45 and over and have some of the lowest rates of illicit drug use in the general population. A larger percentage of unemployed people have never used any illicit drug compared to employed people (57.1% compared to 48.8%). More employed people have recently used cocaine than unemployed people (3.8% compared to 2.4%) and the percentage of ecstasy use for both groups is the same (at 2.9%).¹¹

People who are unemployed are more likely than employed people to have recently used methamphetamine, but this is less than 5% of the unemployed population; and 90% have never used it. While methamphetamine usage is a serious health problem, these health statistics do not indicate wide spread wastage of income support payments on drugs.

By adopting the mindset that Newstart is a ‘transitory’ payment, successive governments have continually failed to align payments with

community expectations about what it takes to financially survive on a daily basis. By working alongside people in need, the Society knows that there are no quick fixes. Further, there is nothing transitory about three-quarters of Newstart recipients being on the payment for over one year.¹²

Throughout the year the Society has continued to advocate for the rights of people on income support to be treated with humanity and able to live a lifestyle that meets community expectations of what is fair and reasonable. Submissions on the [Cashless Debit Card Bill \(August 2018\)](#), [Maintaining Income Thresholds Bill \(August 2018\)](#) and the [Drug Testing Trial Bill \(April 2018\)](#) were completed this year, along with the Society’s [Federal Budget Priorities Statement \(March 2019\)](#). The Society will continue to be a voice for the voiceless and thanks its Members for their generosity and commitment to helping those in need to recover their dignity and personal integrity, so that they can forge ahead and change their own destiny and the future of their local community.¹³

10 ABC Radio National. (2018). Life Matters. *Understanding the real reasons people are unemployed*. 12 August 2019. Dr Michelle Peterie. Professor Greg Marston. School of Social Sciences, University of Queensland. Accessed at: https://abcmedia.akamaized.net/rn/podcast/2019/08/lms_20190812_0906.mp3

11 AIHW, National Drug Household Survey, Ch.8 Specific Population Groups, Table 8.5, Drug use by employment status

12 76% of Newstart recipients have been on this payment for more than one year. Australian Government (2018). *DSS Demographic Data (December 2018)*. Data.gov.au. Accessed at: <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/dss-payment-demographic-data/resource/c4db7814-fde1-4448-a7b5-94fb666b85d2>

13 St Vincent de Paul Society. (2011). *The Rule*, 7th Edition. Part I. Accessed at https://www.vinnies.org.au/icms_docs/168122_The_Rule.pdf

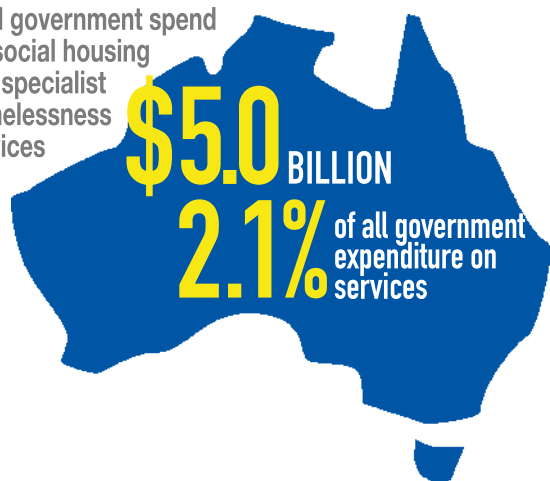
Affordable Safe and Secure Housing

The Society has long recognised that improving access to affordable and appropriate housing is a matter of social responsibility, the provision and availability of which are central to human dignity and autonomy. Housing is a core human right and the foundation every Australian needs for full economic and community participation. The human reality of homelessness is told through the personal stories of the many people the Society assists every day.¹⁵

In 1945, when the first Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement was signed, the objective was to ensure that every person in Australia had access to secure, adequate and appropriate housing at a price within his or her capacity to pay. The intention was to alleviate housing poverty and ensure housing assistance was delivered equitably to people in different forms of housing tenure.¹⁶

Fast forward almost 75 years and in July 2018, the Commonwealth entered into a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) with states and territories and committed \$1.56 billion each year over ten years to June 2029. This represented a small percentage increase (1.88%) from the 2018–19 annual allocation of \$1.53 billion. Annual funding of \$125 million was also committed to homelessness services, to be matched by states and territories. State and territory governments were also required to develop housing and homelessness strategies, with priority areas defined by the Commonwealth.¹⁷ All up, in 2017–18 the total government spend for social housing and specialist homelessness services was \$5.0 billion, or around 2.1% of all government expenditure on services.¹⁸

total government spend
for social housing
and specialist
homelessness
services



There must be made available to all people everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing and shelter.

The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World

May 2018 saw the appointment of a Minister for Housing and an Assistant Minister for Community Housing and Homelessness, with the Minister for Families and Social Services retaining responsibility for the NHHA, Commonwealth Rent Assistance and the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS). During the 2017–18 financial year, a National Housing Finance Investment Corporation was also established to help finance community housing at discounted interest rates.

However, various parliamentary inquiries, peak bodies, service providers and academics have repeatedly called for increased funding for emergency relief, public and community housing and improvements to Rent Assistance and the NRAS.¹⁹

It appears that since the first housing agreement was signed, successive governments have gone backwards with respect to meeting current housing demand, let alone be able to respond adequately to projected growth.

14 Catholic Social Welfare. 1995. *Housing in Australia: More than bricks and mortar*. Vol.4, No.2., Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission. Accessed at: <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/19991125175504/http://www.acswc.org.au/PUBLICAT.HTM>

15 St Vincent de Paul Society National Council. 2016. *The Ache for Home*. Accessed at https://www.vinnies.org.au/icms_docs/238828_The_Ache_for_Home_Paper_2016.pdf

16 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 1993. *Australia's Welfare 1993: Services and Assistance*. AGPS. Canberra. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/australias-welfare-1993/contents/table-of-contents>.

17 Australian Government. Department of Social Services. 2019. National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Accessed at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/housing-support-programs-services-homelessness/national-housing-and-homelessness-agreement>.

Priority areas for housing include social housing, encouraging growth and supporting the viability of the community housing sector, tenancy reform, home ownership and planning and zoning reform initiatives. Priority cohorts for homelessness services include women and children affected by family and domestic violence, children and young people, Indigenous Australians, people experiencing repeat homelessness, people exiting from care or institutions into homelessness and older people.

18 Australian Government. Productivity Commission. 2019. *Report on Government Services*. Part G. Accessed at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2019/housing-and-homelessness#footnotes>

19 Parliament of Australia. 2004. *A hand up not a hand out: Renewing the fight against poverty - Report on poverty and financial hardship; 2008 Henry Tax review*, Parliament of Australia. 2019. *Living on the Edge: Inquiry into Intergenerational Welfare Dependency*. ACOSS. 2019 *Social Housing as Infrastructure*. 2019. Media Release. 2019. *Community Housing Industry Association congratulates the re-elected Coalition Government*.

The economic and social benefits to increased investment in social housing are far-reaching. From an economic perspective, public investment boosts growth in jobs and incomes. Every dollar invested is estimated to boost GDP by \$1.30.²⁰ Access to housing is also recognised as a vital determinant of wellbeing that is associated with better outcomes in health, education and employment, as well as economic and social participation.²¹

The current lack of affordable housing is a key driver of poverty and homelessness and, for the Society, increases the number of people seeking support from frontline services. Research commissioned by St Vincent de Paul Society QLD shows for each change in address, requests for assistance increase by 26%.²²

Much work has been underway across the Society throughout 2018–19 to address wide-ranging housing needs. Amelie Housing Ltd has continued its roll-out of affordable, secure housing across New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia, which improves and empowers the lives of so many Australians. The new Ozanam House was opened in Victoria offering crisis accommodation and a homelessness recovery centre, with an emphasis on privacy, security and ‘wrap-around’ support and referral services.

20 ACOSS. 2019. *How to reduce homelessness and boost incomes and jobs: Social housing as infrastructure*. Accessed at: <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ACOSS-Brief-Social-Housing-Investment-as-Infrastructure.pdf>. With reference to KPMG’s 2012 Social Housing Initiative Review.

21 Commonwealth Senate Economic References Committee. 2015. *Out of reach? The Australian housing affordability challenge*. Canberra

22 Ambrey, C., Parsell, C., Spallek, M., Robinson, R. 2017. *SOL Data Analysis Report: Taking time to disrupt dependency on emergency relief assistance*, Institute for Social Science Research. The University of Queensland. Commissioned by St Vincent de Paul Queensland.

23 Australian Government. 2019. Productivity Commission. *Vulnerable Private Renters: Evidence and Options*. Accessed at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/renters>

24 Homelessness Australia. 2016. *Homeless statistics*. With reference to ABS’ 2016 Census. Accessed at: <https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/about/homelessness-statistics>

25 Troy, D. Nouwelant, R., Randolph, B. 2019. *Estimating need and costs of social and affordable housing delivery*. UNSW. City Futures Research Centre.

26 AHURI. 2016. Census data shows falling proportion of households in social housing. Media Release. Accessed at: <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/policy/ahuri-briefs/census-shows-falling-proportion-of-households-in-social-housing>

27 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2018. *Housing assistance in Australia 2018*. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2018/contents/priority-groups-and-wait-lists>

28 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2018. *Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2017–18*. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2017-18/contents/contents>

29 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2018. *National Social Housing Survey 2018*. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/national-social-housing-survey-2018-key-results/report-editions>

We know that in the private rental market:

- more than one million low-income households (2.65 million people) rented in the private market in 2018 and this figure has more than doubled over the past two decades;
- two-thirds of vulnerable private renters are in rental stress. 170,000 households have less than \$250 available each week after paying rent;
- half of households experiencing rental stress are still experiencing rental stress four years later; and
- maximum payment rates under the Commonwealth Rent Assistance Scheme have fallen behind average rents over the past two decades.²³

We also know:

- at least 115,000 people are homeless on any given night and this has increased 13.7% in five years²⁴
- there is a national shortage of just over 400,000 homes that are affordable for people who are homeless or living on the lowest incomes (the lowest 20% by household income);²⁵
- the share of all homes that are public or community housing fell from 7.1% in 1991 to 4.2% in 2016; and²⁶
- 190,000 households are on waiting lists for social housing.²⁷

With respect to specialist homelessness service agencies:

- 288,800 people, or 1 in 85 Australians, required assistance in 2017–18;
- 4 in 10 people were homeless on presentation to a specialist homelessness service agency; and
- most people assisted were female (61%), and close to 3 in 10 (29%) were aged under 18.²⁸

And for social housing tenants:

- multiple benefits are gained from living in social housing, including feeling more settled and managing rent better;
- most tenants are satisfied with services provided by their housing organisation (75%); and
- reports of satisfaction are closely related to the condition of tenants’ homes: as structural problems rise, satisfaction falls.²⁹

Queensland established Vinnies Housing and implemented its Vinnies Housing Strategic Plan 2018–2023, along with an agreement to commit a further \$6.5 million in 2018–19 into housing stock. In Western Australia, Vinnies Housing Services entered into a new partnership with Indigo Junction for tenancy support and case management specifically for young women; and a successful young mothers' share house, facilitated through the Horizon House Young Mother and Baby Program, was renewed. Tasmania's crisis in accommodation has driven up the numbers of people seeking a safe and affordable place to live, and this has been evidenced by a 91% increase in demand experienced by Bethlehem House.

The Society thanks its Conference Members, volunteers and employees for their hard work and dedication to advocating for improved housing options in their respective states and territories.

The Society continues to call for:

- formal recognition, by all governments, of the human right to housing as a basis for housing policy and acceptance of the obligations this places on governments and the community;
- a new national, multi-sector working group to develop a national housing affordability and homelessness strategy that complements state and territory plans and supports a

comprehensive and coordinated cross jurisdictional approach to housing affordability and homelessness prevention. The national strategy should be guided by respect for human rights and community diversity by balancing the needs for employment, housing, health, education and transport services with the emerging opportunities for improved and ecologically efficient building;

- the establishment of an independent agency to provide specialised policy advice to inform decision-making across all levels of government, and to monitor, analyse and report on housing and homelessness indicators across jurisdictions;
- increased funding under the Rental Assistance Scheme to ensure that it properly meets the needs of those using it, including examination of the disparity between public housing tenants and private tenants;
- improvements to the financial incentives to housing providers under NRAS to increase the number of eligible NRAS tenants and improve the rental rate; and
- \$10 billion of Commonwealth funds to be allocated across states and territories on the basis of need and the cost of new housing in each location.



A new beginning *Isir's Story*



Isir moved to Perth from Morocco when she married but after the arrival of their baby girl she separated from her husband. Being new to the country she had nowhere else to go and found herself in a women's refuge. While in the refuge, she found she had limited options due to her temporary resident status. So hoping things would change, she returned to her husband.

When Isir entered the women's refuge for a third time, she decided to seek further help. She could not return to Morocco because her daughter was an Australian citizen and organising papers for her to leave due to her husband being a different nationality, was very difficult. She learnt that finding permanent housing took time to apply for, and it was going to be difficult to support herself and her daughter when she had no job or income.

In the refuge, Isir began working with a support worker who put her in contact with the Vinnies Housing Service which provides transitional and crisis accommodation to people who experience homelessness due to domestic violence, mental illness and many other issues.

Vinnies was able to find Isir a transitional housing unit which was fully furnished so she could move straight in and feel settled, as well as regularly supporting her with food vouchers and financial assistance.

The stable accommodation allowed Isir to enrol in study so she could achieve a qualification which would gain her employment and a regular income, helping her work towards her goal for independence.

Although Isir is yet to complete her studies, she is saving in the hope that she will be granted permanent housing soon. She speaks of her gratitude towards the help she has received so far from Vinnies, at a time when she was alone with no family or support. "It does really make a difference. It doesn't matter what it is, the type of help, it is the action of help, which is even greater, especially for someone who is alone or has no family or support."

Receiving help from Vinnies has given her the confidence to now work towards her future, making a new home in Western Australia for her and her daughter.

A cup of tea, and so much more

Mark's Story

Mark had been living in a modified trailer for over three years following the breakdown of his marriage. A local Conference was helping Mark with basic necessities like food and warm clothing, as well as social visits for company.

The Conference referred Mark to Vinnies Street to Home in January 2019.

His Street to Home case manager first worked to resolve his homelessness. He was on the Housing ACT list but couldn't get priority status without evidence that he could sustain a tenancy, and further supports in place. Street to Home had no suitable transitional housing but gave Housing ACT the required assurances that substantial long-term supports were in place, and he was approved for priority, including a discretionary approval for a two-bedroom property so his children could stay with him.

His levels of anxiety and living situation meant he couldn't work and he was receiving Newstart Allowance. Street to Home worked with him to understand Centrelink processes around Newstart Allowance and the Disability Support Pension, and to link him with a specialist Disability Employment Service. He started feeling more confident that he would be able to gain employment with the right support.

The greatest improvement for Mark came when he recently moved into a Housing ACT property. He was supported by a number of different St Vincent de Paul Society services to move: Street to Home helped him to complete the Housing ACT sign-up process, do an initial grocery shop, connect utilities and access furniture from the Vinnies Mitchell Warehouse; conferences provided whitegoods; and the Energy Efficiency program prioritised him for advice, draught proofing, curtains and a heated throw. The ability to shower, cook, and stay warm has seen his health improve.

With the help of Vinnies, Mark was able to move into a house and turn it into a real home. He has a passion for gardening and had, within weeks of moving in,



transformed the garden, by pruning back overgrown vegetation and putting in a veggie patch. He'd also painted several rooms of the house.

The local Vinnies Conference has continued to help Mark with basic furniture and other items to help him feel at home. Important to him was a bed for himself and one for his children to use when they visited, something he could not arrange without a home. The Conference also provided a small dining table and four chairs for his family room.

When the Conference Members finished delivering the bed, table and chairs, Mark offered to make them a cup of tea. This meant a lot to Mark, who had been gradually acquiring enough cups and a kettle so he could make and share a drink with others. Having the table to sit at completed the equation. The Conference Members could have said make it another time as they had other visits to complete, but they agreed to have a cuppa. This meant so much to Mark.

It is the time taken with companions that is as important as the material things Vinnies provides. To sit and share a cup of tea – a simple act of community, meant so much to both Mark and to the Conference Members. We all need to consider how we can make more time for each other.

Mark now has increased contact with his children and has had his son come to stay. He is now energetic, feeling positive about his abilities, and is hopeful for the future.

National Redress Scheme

The National Redress Scheme was established by the Commonwealth Government in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Royal Commission listened to the voice of thousands of people about the abuse they experienced as children in institutions such as orphanages, children's homes, foster care, schools, churches and sporting clubs. Along with state and territory governments, a variety of religious and non-religious non-government organisations administered these institutions.

The National Redress Scheme acknowledges that many children cared for in institutions were sexually abused and that those who were abused have experienced long-term suffering. The Royal Commission held that institutions are accountable for this abuse. The scheme is designed to help people who have experienced sexual abuse as a child while in the care of an institution to access counselling, a direct personal response from the institution and a 'redress payment'.

The scheme will operate for a period of 10 years.

Institutions that have provided services to children can join the scheme and in so doing agree to provide redress to individuals who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse whilst in the institution. Independent decision makers

consider applications made by an individual and make recommendations about the redress and to conduct reviews where necessary.

The National Council made a decision in February 2019 to join the scheme and informed the Commonwealth of this decision.

The Royal Commission identified that one of the major challenges faced by individuals seeking to make a claim for the sexual abuse they had suffered was knowing which institution to notify of the claim. In order to make it as easy as possible for a person to make a claim involving one of the Society's institutions, the National Council determined to establish a new legal entity.

This company will be the vehicle to join all the existing and all the past institutions that operated in the name of the Society in Australia over the past 90 years into a single legal entity. National Council anticipates this will make it much easier for persons to receive a direct response and/or any redress payment from the Society.

Work is underway to identify all the Society's legal entities going back approximately 90 years that did or may have offered services or supports to children. When this work is complete it will inform State and Territory Councils of how the Society can respond to potential future claims for redress.

VINNIES Drought Appeal

Helping people get through the drought

The current drought is shaping up to be the worst on record and there is no drought-breaking rain expected over the coming months.

Over the past year, Vinnies NSW has raised more than **\$12 million** for drought support through government grants, and generous donations from businesses, community organisations, and individuals.

This has helped more than **3,000 families** in the past year. This support has assisted farmers and regional families with living expenses and the costs of keeping farms up and running.

Vinnies QLD delivered **\$2 million** in drought assistance to farmers and farming communities from South West and Central Queensland, helping with food, water, bills and livestock feed. The funds included donations and assistance from the government, valued donors and corporate and community supporters.

The Drought Community Support Initiative

Supporting Farming Communities Doing It Tough

In early 2018, drought started to affect large parts of eastern Australia. In response, the Society in New South Wales, Queensland and the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese ran public drought appeals and started assisting struggling farmers. Other states soon joined the effort.

In November 2018, the Society was one of several charitable organisations invited by the Commonwealth Government to distribute funds to drought-affected communities through the Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI). The DCSI ran from December 2018 to June 2019. It assisted farmers, farmworkers and farm suppliers/contractors who were doing it tough because of the drought. Under DCSI, the Society provided up to \$2,000 in cash and up to \$1,000 in vouchers to each eligible household. Vouchers were designed to benefit local businesses, who are also struggling in times of drought.

The Society's Members, volunteers and employees provided assistance, both financial and non-financial, across the drought-stricken regions of Queensland, New South Wales (including Canberra/Goulburn) and South Australia. Over the six and a half months of the project, our people assisted 3,724 households across 90 Local Government Areas with DCSI funds. The money helped those households with a range of farm business expenses, as well as household expenses

such as groceries, petrol, utility bills, phone bills, medical expenses and school fees.

Those who came forward were extremely grateful for the assistance they received including the personal involvement of the Society's Members who often offered more than just the DCSI funds to individuals and families. The Society appreciates that while this financial assistance was widely welcomed, many families continue to face difficulties coping with the impact of ongoing drought. "You can see the impact this funding has had on local farmers and businesses... [The initiative] makes a community feel so grateful that they are being thought of by others. I think the St Vincent de Paul Society does an amazing job, not just through this drought funding, but in the everyday lives of people in need."

At the time of writing, large parts of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia are still in drought.

Parts of the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia are also affected. The short-term forecasts from the Bureau of Meteorology bring little hope of a short-term recovery.

While the DCSI has ended, the Society will continue to assist farming communities facing hardship because of the drought. Our people will continue to do what they have always done – offering a hand-up to anyone and everyone doing it tough.

Approximately 77% of the people the Society assisted were farmers, 15% were farmworkers and 8% were farm suppliers or contractors.

53% of the people who came forward for assistance were male and 47% were female.

There was an average of 2.4 people living in each of the households we assisted.





Neil Medcalf was 69 when he bought his 1,000 acre dream farm in Wirrinya, 70 kilometres from Parkes

The retired senior police sergeant would have liked to have made the move much sooner, but the global financial crisis delayed the opportunity by the best part of a decade.

"I remember thinking: if I don't get this bloody farm before I'm 70, I'll never get it. That was 2016 and it was a wonderful year, crop-wise, stock-wise. Everything just fell into place. I thought: how easy is this? I didn't know any better."

In 2017, the drought hit.

"And it just got worse and worse. A lot of the locals are saying this is worse than the Millennium Drought."

For Neil, who is divorced, being on his own is something of a mixed blessing. While there are definitely times when he could do with an extra pair of hands, the upside is that he only has himself to feed.

"I don't know how a young family would get on. The previous owner installed a large rainwater tank, which is plenty for me, but I know they used to run out."

Although he has suffered economically from the drought, Neil says "you've just got to press on and do the best you can".

Neil received drought assistance from Vinnies, thanks to the generous contributions of our donors. Your support helped him to pay off outstanding bills and keep his farm up and running.

"If things are tight, that \$1,000 or \$500 goes a long way. I used the money to pay my power bill. And just last Sunday, I had to buy some oats for the sheep. I've destocked to a certain extent but still have about 300 head."

Even though things are difficult, Neil has no regrets. "I have always had a dream of owning a piece of land. I have friends who when they retired, decided to travel, but I knew what I wanted to do."

Working in the shearing shed is his favourite job

"The noise, the smell. In the evening, sometimes, you'll be out in the paddock and it will be starting to get dark, and you will look at the sunset and think: it doesn't get much better than this."



2019 Vinnies CEO Sleepout breaks record

This year, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised record funds amounting to almost **\$7.9 million**

1,637 CEOs senior executives, community and government leaders participated.

The money raised enable the Society to provide

1,590,554 meals to people with food insecurity,

689,819 beds for a safe night's sleep,

and throughout the year **1,949,673 individual support sessions** to people who were at risk or experiencing homelessness.

Where the money goes

The Society continues to see the impact of increased living costs and the lack of access to affordable housing. These factors are pushing more individuals and families into homelessness. The Society has adopted a national approach to the CEO Sleepout campaign.

This year's funds will be used to assist people who are experiencing homelessness, to deliver a range of support services for people at risk of homelessness, to allow us to offer emergency assistance such as food vans for people sleeping rough and, to provide emergency accommodation. Funds will also support the work of our members who do home visitation to provide early intervention, to prevent a person or family becoming homeless.

The Society assists people experiencing hardship by providing support with basic necessities such as food, clothing, household items, utility bills and rental assistance. They offer referrals and friendship through home visitations. This help is essential to relieving stress on the growing number of households that are forced to seek our help to pay important household bills and other essentials and to put food on their table. These activities are designed to avoid individuals and families becoming homeless.

The event

In 2019, with most other states and territories celebrating more than 10 years of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout, more than 1,600 CEOs, senior executives and government leaders came together to raise awareness of the growing problem of homelessness in Australia. We heard stories from people we assist, highlighting the exceptional work that the Society does in changing lives, giving someone a hand up, to get themselves back on track.

Dan Rosen, CEO Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) from Sydney participated in his second Vinnies CEO Sleepout this year. He said,

“On the night itself, we have the chance to speak with people who have experienced homelessness and used Vinnies services. These discussions really opened my eyes to the reality of how people end up in this situation and how relatively easy it is to “fall through the cracks”, through an unfortunate turn of events such as job loss, family illness, or marriage breakdown. Ensuring that there are places like Vinnies to help people get back on their feet is just so important.”

He also encouraged his peers to get involved, “to gain greater insight into homelessness in Australia. It is a humbling experience and empowering to know that in some small way you are contributing to this incredibly important issue.”



Nick Reade, BankSA CEO has raised \$657,772 over the past five years, and has been the highest fundraiser in SA for the past five years and nationally, for the past three.



Dan Rosen



Proud to support our partner countries

The Society continues to support fellow Vincentians to undertake its work in our partnered countries in the Asia Pacific region through Twinning, Project Support, the Assist-A-Student (AAS) Program and Emergency Responses.

Twining

Twining is the direct link between two Conferences or Councils. It promotes spirituality, friendship and an understanding between cultures, and consists of prayer, regular communication and financial support. The Conferences and Councils provide quarterly funds, and special grants at Easter and Christmas time, to undertake Conference work. Twining at the Council level builds the Society's capacity in overseas countries with funds to support Councils manage the Society's affairs in their respective regions.

There are 1,121 Conferences and Councils in Australia which support overseas Conferences in the Twining program, with 554 Conferences supporting more than one twin. We provide assistance to Vincentians in Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

[Read some recent twining letters from overseas.](#)

Project Support

Through Project Support, Conferences in the Asia Pacific region can request support from their Australian twin through their National Council for a small project to address a specific need in their area.

Examples of projects supported during the period include the funding of cow banks, providing wet-grinders to manufacture food pastes for sale in a small business, a school lunch program and a grass broom making project. It is important to note that these projects are initiated by overseas twins with their National Councils and are designed to help people in the community supported by the overseas Conference to become self-sufficient.

Emergency Response

From time-to-time, in response to a natural disaster, the National Council of Australia provides funds to the National Council of the affected country, where they identify local Vincentians in these areas who have the capacity and skills to manage and distribute funds to those affected.

The table below summarises the twining and project funds provided in FY 18–19. Additionally, \$44,444 was provided in humanitarian assistance to Kerala in India and Lao PDR, after both countries experienced floods.

	Twining	Council-to-Council	Christmas and Easter Grants	Projects	Total
Cambodia	\$240				\$240
FSM	\$320				\$320
Fiji	\$7,680	\$4,000	\$1,200		\$12,880
India	\$419,180	\$17,720	\$133,150	\$32,736	\$602,786
Indonesia	\$76,960	\$4,440	\$11,840	\$20,774	\$114,014
Kiribati	\$320				\$320
Laos	\$320				\$320
Myanmar	\$23,200	\$14,600	\$12,000	\$12,500	\$62,300
Philippines	\$80,450	\$7,480	\$24,196	\$1,001	\$113,127
Solomon Islands	\$320		\$400		\$720
Sri Lanka	\$1,280	\$2,400	\$500	\$14,218	\$18,398
Thailand	\$41,010	\$5,175	\$13,430	\$1,200	\$60,815
TOTAL	\$651,280	\$55,815	\$196,716	\$82,429	\$986,240

Case Study

Grass Broom Making Project



Nativity of the Virgin Mary Conference in Thailand developed a project with their local community to purchase materials to enable community members to make and sell grass brooms. This small project of \$1,860 was funded by the Bathurst Central Council in New South Wales.

Klonglarn Village, where the project was implemented, consists of about 300 people. Most are low-income families earning around \$100 per month, mainly from agricultural production. The project offered members of the community an opportunity to gain skills in a new trade, diversify their income and improve their ability to support themselves. This project will be self-sustaining as some profits will be used to buy the raw materials for the brooms, ensuring the production continues.



Assist-a-Student Program

Unique to Australia, the AAS Program recognises the importance of education as one of the key planks to help break the cycle of poverty. The positive flow-on effects are often felt by family members, the community and the individual themselves when given the opportunity to gain an education. The AAS Program provides funding on an annual basis to supported countries that identify and select students to be supported through Conference Members.

The selected students receive \$70 per year from the donated funds. In 2018–19, 5,026 students were funded under the AAS Program. The table at right summarises the AAS Program funds provided.

	AAS Program	Students Assisted
Sri Lanka	\$71,820	1,026
Philippines	\$98,000	1,400
Myanmar	\$21,000	300
Indonesia	\$35,000	500
Fiji	\$63,000	900
Thailand	\$63,000	900

National Statement of Comprehensive Income 2018–19

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

	Revenue \$m	Operating Expenses \$m	Net surplus / (deficit) \$m
COMMUNITY SERVICES			
Aged Care	131.9	132.7	(0.8)
Community Housing	29.5	18.9	10.6
Disability Services	73.9	72.7	1.2
Financial Assistance Services	0.3	0.3	0.0
Help for People in Crisis	20.6	71.7	(51.1)
Home assist services	7.0	9.6	(2.6)
Homeless Services	70.7	93.0	(22.3)
Accommodation and Support Services	135.1	104.3	30.8
Migrants and Refugees	0.5	1.5	(0.9)
Natural Disaster Recovery and Relief	15.5	15.4	0.1
Overseas Development	1.3	1.6	(0.3)
Youth Services	0.6	2.8	(2.1)
Total Community Services	486.8	524.4	(37.5)
SUPPORTING SERVICES			
Fundraising	63.3	11.3	52.1
Operational Support Services	6.7	21.0	(14.3)
Retail Operations	191.6	137.7	53.9
Total Supporting Services	261.7	170.0	91.7
SHARED SERVICES			
Management and Administration Services	17.5	32.7	(15.2)
Finance Services	13.8	12.8	1.0
Human Resource Services	–	9.5	(9.5)
Information & Communications Technology Services	–	16.3	(16.3)
Legal and Compliance Services	–	2.5	(2.5)
Total Shared Services	31.4	73.8	(42.5)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
Reclassification adjustment on sale of available for sale financial assets	(0.8)	–	(0.8)
Net changes in fair value of available for sale financial assets	3.5	–	3.5
Total other comprehensive income for the year	2.7	–	2.7
Total comprehensive income for the year	782.5	768.2	14.4



St Vincent de Paul Society

NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc.

good works

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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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