

the Record

Summer 2015–16



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works



HOPE



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

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.

This logo represents the hand of Christ that blesses the cup, the hand of love that offers the cup, and the hand of suffering that receives the cup.

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The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia wishes to acknowledge that we are on Aboriginal land. We pay respects to all traditional custodians.

This publication may contain images of deceased members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. They are used with the greatest respect and appreciation.

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the publishers.

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www.vinnies.org.au

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was welcomed to the world at 4.18pm on
Monday 30 November.



Letters to the editor

Thank you

I am writing to say thank you for your efforts as staff and volunteers in supporting the multitude of homeless that you have helped by the grace of God, as well as the homeless you are yet to help.

Just over three years ago I had to ask for help at Bethlehem House in Hobart, Tasmania. I had been living on the streets for some eight months and was suffering from pneumonia, pleurisy and hypothermia. They gave me a warm bed, fed me, aided me in seeking medical treatment and provided a counsellor to help me overcome my poker machine addiction, which I had suffered for the previous 12 years.

They let me stay for some 18 months and let me recover and face my demons. They then aided me in securing a supported tenancy at Common Ground Campbell Street in Hobart where I have been since. I am now completely debt free: I owed \$17,000 in gambling debts and by the grace of God again, they are gone.

I am a new person as a result. I haven't touched a poker machine since entering Beth House and don't gamble at all to this day—God has taken away the desire in his magnificence, and I can see that in trusting in him he is giving me a new wine skin!

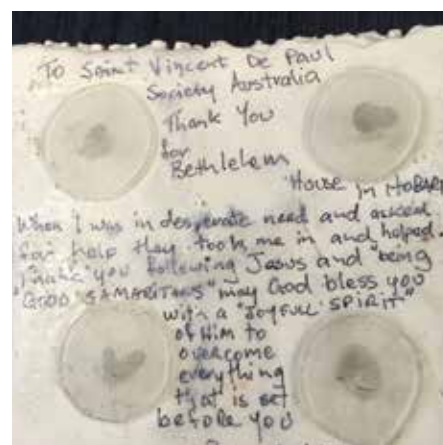
So thank you for being there, with the love of God and the grace of his Holy Spirit. May he bless you in all that you face!

And here is a gift: God led me to carve the original out of a block of plaster, after which I made a mould and have reproduced some 90 pieces and given them to individuals and organisations that have reached out to help the homeless!

The words around the base are inspired by the truth.

I was cold, tired, hungry, lonely and didn't care—but you did.

*Robert Kreshl
Tasmania*



Thank you, Aunty Betty

I didn't know why we had to leave the orphanage after a couple of years. I didn't even know why Mum died—or I should say, how—on the weekend of my sixth birthday. I didn't understand that Dad was locked in Larundel Mental Hospital, trying to see the light again.

I didn't know why only one of my three sisters could live with me at Aunty Betty's, or where the other two were going, or when I would see them again. That's because, sheltering me from adult themes, Aunty Betty took me, aged eight, and my sister, 10, into her home in Colac, Victoria, with a smile on her face. Aunty Betty was truly a devout Catholic and

volunteer for the St Vincent de Paul Society. Elizabeth Betty Bond's life, and her service in the St Vincent de Paul Society is available to read online: <http://bit.ly/1Islcbi>.

In all the years since my time with Aunty Betty, I'd never sought help or charity up until June 2015 when I was 'let go' from the Melbourne law firm where I worked. I went into a fit, sending my CV out everywhere, but I had to wait three weeks for a Centrelink 'allowance'. I was brought to my knees and joined the Salvation Army's line for a \$2 meal, and I called the St Vincent de Paul Society for assistance. I was overwhelmed to be given grocery vouchers, tearful to learn that a table would be delivered to my

little abode, plus a couch and a couple of chairs—none of which I had.

As I saw the St Vincent de Paul Society volunteer out the front door, my mind returned to Aunty Betty and all she had done. I don't think the volunteer knew who Aunty Betty was, but when I told him my story he did say something that sat with me as profound, and so true.

Oh, well, what goes around comes around.'

Thank you, Aunty Betty. The cat and I had meat that night, and the next day I was stronger.

*Noeleen Ginnane
Kew, Victoria*

From the President

BY GRAHAM WEST

Recently I had cause to reflect upon the Rule of the Society. Not to adjudicate on a matter but simply to reflect upon our Society's call to action and service, or as the Rule so elegantly puts it:

'follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love'

There is something incredibly powerful in the joy of liberating love. It accepts without judgement, it is expanding rather than limiting. To liberate us or set us free is part of the mission that Jesus set himself when he reached back into Isaiah to begin his ministry:

'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.'

It is also a two-way gift. In sharing our time and love with those in need, we are just as transformed by this liberating love—in fact often more so. I'm sure all of you have memories of visits or encounters that have made you stop and reflect or change.

Our founders, our Pope and our Rule, also challenge us to adapt to a changing world.

'The Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.'

These responses and changes to extend this liberating love through service will come from all levels of the



Graham West

Society, and it is the role of all of us to ensure that we listen with the 'ear of the heart', not only to those we serve but to our brothers and sisters in the Society.

When I reflect upon the incredible gifts the Society has given me throughout my service, I often reflect that as a very young person in the Society we were supported to try new ideas; a night patrol, a youth conference and others, all of them driven by young members and supported by older members. We were not limited, but were liberated to try these new forms of service.

New ideas and responses are not the sole preserve of the young. They are to be found throughout the Society. When challenged with new approaches our responses should aim to be liberating, not limiting. How can we help? Of course, that is not to say all ideas will be the right ones! But sometimes the way we respond to the suggestion is just as important as the final decision.

We know that the nature of service is changing. People seek causes rather than joining institutions, and people may serve with us for shorter periods of time, but if we are to live our Vincentian vocation and listen to the call of the Spirit, these gifts of service are just as crucial and will come in new forms.

Recently in Adelaide the National Council was briefed on a new approach to home visits being trialled in Elizabeth, following the announcement of the Holden plant closure. In addition, there are conferences that work with refugees across parishes, some that serve our friends in other countries, those that visit prisons and more. In fact as is often quoted and attributed to our founder, 'no work of charity is foreign to the Society'.

I look forward to watching the Spirit at work as we respond to the challenges ahead of us—to share God's liberating love through new and existing forms of Vincentian service. ♦

Graham West is the National President of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia.

CALL TO ACTION

How can we, as members of the St Vincent de Paul Society, better respond to the mission of justice, liberation and love?

Please send your ideas to us in 200 words or less by 1 February 2015.

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We will publish a selection of your contributions in the next edition of *The Record*.

National Office Internship Program

BY RIK SUTHERLAND

Since mid-2014, the St Vincent de Paul National Council has been accepting students studying at a range of universities as interns.

The students complete a placement with us as a part of their degrees at the Australian National University, Australian Catholic University and RMIT (under remote supervision). As Policy Advisor, I manage the interns in their work, which includes drafting submissions, contributing to media releases, preparing research memos and policy documents, attending meetings with me or on my behalf, and writing content for online and for *The Record*.

Bringing in new people always takes time and resources—not only desks and computers, but substantial supervision and training, as well as all the communication difficulties that come when humans interact. The rewards to the St Vincent de Paul National Office, however, have been enormous. Managing our advocacy agenda has become a lot easier with the help of one or two extra people. When times are busy, we can cover more material, and when things are quieter, we can spend more resources on longer-term projects. This has extended to additional help for other staff members here as well.

I also believe that the quality of policy output has improved since we began taking on interns. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, we have capacity in some cases to go into more detail, because the interns have more time to research issues. Secondly, and more importantly, the interns each bring interesting and new perspectives that challenge me and the way I would normally write. For example, the Constitutional



Thevini Kirupakaran with our St Vincent de Paul Society Administration Officer Gregory

Recognition submission last year included detailed historical and theoretical analysis that I almost certainly wouldn't have gone into, but the interns at the time—who were social workers—felt was very important. This really strengthened the submission. Thirdly, the ANU law interns bring the particular benefit of being required to produce a 5000 word research paper that will be of value to the organisation, as part of their assessment. This significantly increases the research capacity of the National Office. So far, interns have worked on not-for-profit engagement in submissions, housing and criminal justice, housing and gender, and mental health and gambling.

Taking on interns is also important for community organisations as a way of 'practising what we preach' and giving back to the community. Our interns have all told me they have gained a lot from their time here, as it has broadened their perspectives about how the work they do on the ground (as legal practitioners, social workers, etc.) is impacted by high-level politics.

Work at a national peak body is something very few students get to experience, of which the interns are very appreciative. Our intern Joseph Frawley was so impacted by his experience that he went on to raise \$19,000 for the Society!

Thevini Kirupakaran, a recent intern, gave *The Record* a glimpse of her experience:

From the very first day of my internship at St Vincent de Paul National Office, I was immersed in the numerous initiatives undertaken by the Society that aid the most vulnerable. Throughout my experience, I had the opportunity to contribute to various policy works on a range of issues including refugee and asylum seekers, housing, disability, health and domestic violence.

I also had the opportunity to join a conference member in his weekly visits. These experiences allowed me to understand the full range of ways the Society supports those who need assistance. Everyone I met from the Society—from employees to volunteers—were such kind-hearted, compassionate individuals. I would like to thank everyone in the Society, especially the National Office, for hosting me. It has been an invaluable experience that has impacted me profoundly. Hopefully I can contribute to the 'good works' throughout my life. ♦

Rik Sutherland is Policy Advisor to the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia.

If you'd like to know about the intern program, or how you can get involved in National Office's policy work, please contact Rik Sutherland at policy@svdp.org.au.

Revolutionary Love

BY DR JOHN FALZON

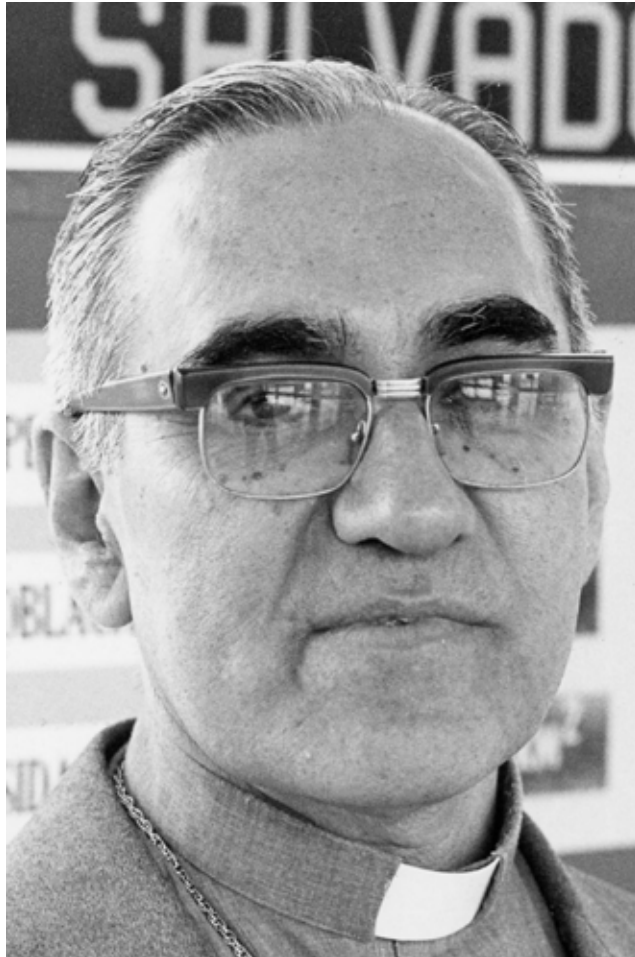
The martyred archbishop Blessed Óscar Romero once said:

*'Even when they call us mad,
when they call us subversives and
communists
and all the other epithets they put
on us,
we know we only preach the
subversive witness of the Beatitudes,
which have turned everything
upside down.'*

The founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, struggled for a just society, for a 'turning upside down' to use the revolutionary principle of the Beatitudes. The sacredness of those on the margins, their liberation from the structures that exclude them; this was what he lived for. This is where he encountered his God: incarnate in the flesh, the blood, the stories of the poor. For us, there is nothing more beautiful or more human than this struggle.

John Honner, in his excellent book *Love and Politics: the revolutionary Frédéric Ozanam*, points out that Frédéric was aware how conservative Catholic opponents might react to his own advocacy for justice, charity and equality. In 1848 he wrote to priests, asking them to work in the city's poor suburbs, warning them '*not be dismayed even if the hard-hearted rich, offended by your attitude, should accuse you of communism*'.

When he stood for election to the National Assembly in 1848, his political platform ran to only two hundred words. He declared that he saw in the February Revolution a secular version of the Gospel expressed in three words: *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. His desire to transform the Paris of his day, to usher in a spring-time of justice, was driven by love.



Archbishop
Óscar Romero

CNS PHOTO/KNA

So what does it mean at the beginning of the 21st century, to practice revolutionary love?

It is heartening, for example, to see Australia opening its doors to an additional intake of 12,000 people from Syria who are fleeing war and persecution. This is a good and beautiful sign and the Society has warmly welcomed the federal government's initiative. At the same time, however, Australia continues to condemn people to shameful offshore limbos of incarceration and abuse; children, women and men who are also fleeing war and persecution and also seeking our protection. Does the government want us to believe that, by some absurd twist of logic and doublespeak, that one group of

people seeking refuge are good and deserving while the other group are undeserving and bad?

To take another example, we all have personal vulnerabilities. Many of us are also economically vulnerable, vulnerable to the threat of unemployment, or to having our unemployment benefits reduced or removed; vulnerable to the threat of fewer casual shifts or the loss of penalty rates; vulnerable to losing the place we call home, no matter how humble it may be. These economic vulnerabilities become personal vulnerabilities. Where we go very wrong as a society is when we blame these economic vulnerabilities on the individual person, as if they could have avoided poverty by

Where we go very wrong as a society is when we blame these economic vulnerabilities on the individual person, as if they could have avoided poverty by being more productive. The causes of these economic inequalities are structural.

being more productive. The causes of these economic inequalities are structural. You don't reduce these inequalities by punishing people who are already poor. You don't address structural problems with behavioural approaches, such as reducing or removing unemployment benefits from the young or from single mums or from people with a disability.

In a joint declaration in 1973, the bishops and superiors of religious orders in Brazil's Central Western Region published a document entitled 'The Cry of the Churches'. In it they prophetically proclaimed:

'We want a world where people will work not to get rich but so that all will have what they need to live on: food, healthcare, housing, schooling, clothes, shoes, water, electricity.

'We want a world where money will be at the service of human beings and not human beings at the service of money ...

'We want a world in which the people will be one, and the division between rich and poor will be abolished.'

Our Vincentian message is similarly clear and uncompromising in its call for justice through the practice of revolutionary love as per the writings and example of Frédéric Ozanam and as per the revolutionary teachings of the scriptures that place this call for justice at the heart of what it means to love:

I cannot endure your festivals and solemnities.

Your New Moons and your pilgrimages

*I hate with all my soul.
They lie heavy on me,
I am tired of bearing them.
When you stretch out your hands,
I turn my eyes away.
You may multiply your prayers,
I shall not listen.
Your hands are covered with blood,
Wash, make yourselves clean.
Take your wrong-doing out of my sight.
Cease to do evil.
Learn to do good,
Search for justice.
Stop the oppressor, help the oppressed;
Do justice to the orphan,
Plead for the widow. (Is 1:12–17)*

Revolutionary love means not condemning our sisters and brothers to the status of non-persons.

The Jesuit palaeontologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote: *'We have the right and the duty to be passionate about the things of the earth.'* Why? Because *'by virtue of the Creation and, still more, of the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see'*.

The profane, or *pro-fanus*, is a reference to the area outside the gate of the temple. In Christ there is no 'outside the temple'. No one is outside. To repeat Teilhard de Chardin: *'nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see'*.

How can we learn to see in this revolutionary way?

The Society's Rule gives us the answer: *'The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those we visit who suffer from injustice.'*

When we assist our brothers and sisters, when we stand in solidarity with them, they entrust to us their collective pain, their dreams, their sacred stories, their collective yearnings that another kind of world is possible.

If we, the St Vincent de Paul Society, want to build a more just and compassionate society we need to enthuse people to be part of our movement. At *our best* we are welcoming and inclusive, open to meeting people's needs whatever they may be. But what are we like at *our worst*? Do we engage in the practice of dividing people into deserving and undeserving? Do we exclude? Do we, contrary to the Gospel, place people outside the temple? Do we seek common ground with the oppressed or do we place ourselves apart? And what of those who wish to join in our mission? Are we as welcoming as we could be? What can we learn from the experience of exclusion that marks the lives of the people we assist? Are we in the habit of practising revolutionary love or do we get stuck in the rut of the safe and the familiar?

How do we need to change so that we can better fulfil our mission? ♦

Dr John Falzon is Chief Executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council.

Our shared responsibility to children

BY MICHELLE PEREIRA

It has been said 'it takes a village to raise a child'—protecting our most vulnerable is a shared responsibility.

Inspired by the mission set forth by our Founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, the St Vincent de Paul Society, both here in Australia and around the world, has a well-established 'justice' story in advocating on behalf of the marginalised, the excluded and the voiceless.

Many children and young people occupy or transition between these categories, and without effective protection, early intervention and on-going support the lasting consequences of their lived experiences of marginalisation, harm and exclusion are catastrophic.

Any person can see that as a community we are failing our children and ourselves if we allow the prevalence of abuse to continue as is.

Australia has acted to protect the rights of all of its citizens, including children and young people, by recognising international standards for the protection of universal human rights and fundamental freedom, including:

- a) the ratification of the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights;
- b) the ratification of the Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and on the Rights of the Child;
- c) the acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The frightening facts:

- In Australia, it is estimated that as many as 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will experience some form of sexual abuse by the time they are 18 years old¹.
- Nationally, between 2012 and 2013, 53,666 cases of child abuse were substantiated by the Department of Human Services (Child Protection)². That is 147 cases a day (not including abuse that is not reported to DHS).

To make matters worse, children are most likely to be abused by someone they know, most often also someone they trust³. It is no longer advisable to merely warn our children about 'stranger danger'. We now know that the real danger lies with people who we have unwittingly welcomed into our lives, into our community groups, into our homes, and even into our hearts.

Tragically, the Royal Commission into child abuse has found that much abuse has also happened in community institutions, many of which claimed to have had the best interests of our young people at heart. The harm of children by anyone is despicable and knowing that there have been numerous perpetrators who have hidden in roles of authority, in organisations that are entrusted with the care of children, is even more sinister.

As an organisation that has enshrined its commitment to the gospel, to being a lay, caring Catholic organisation in our mission and vision statements, and proudly commits itself to standing alongside the vulnerable, the St Vincent de Paul Society has an implicit link to the issue of child safety and protection. We cannot say we stand for justice without also standing for and affording the rights of children. We cannot say that we live the values of compassion, courage and respect, if we remain silent or unresponsive to the abuse of basic human rights of children in our community. With the increased awareness that has come as a result of the Royal Commission and

further research in this area, we also have an increased responsibility to be proactive in addressing the injustices at hand.

In Victoria this acknowledgement has led to an increased awareness and commitment to making our community a safer place for children.

We want to ensure that we are making every effort, from education and training, to a dedicated Child Protection Policy including a clear reporting structure, mandatory Working with Children Checks and National Criminal History Police Checks for all members and volunteers as well as modified recruitment and advertising practices to let people who come in contact with us know that we are committed to child safety.

The responsibility to protect children lies with all of us. As a community we hold our own future in our hands, in the lives of the children we care for today. 'Through every means possible we must do better for the next generation'⁴. The protection of our most vulnerable is a privilege that we in the Society often come face to face with. Yes, it is challenging, and yes, it is hard work, but it is also significantly important work. In Victoria, we started with the premise that even if we manage to save just one child, the process would be worth it. Of course, we can all choose how we respond, but never again can we say that we did not know. ♦

Michelle Pereira is Manager, Youth and Education Development, Membership and Development at the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria.

1. www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats_updated141212.pdf

2. www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-abuse-and-neglect-statistics

3. www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/ChildSexualAbuseFactSheet.pdf

4. www.vinnies.org.au/page/Publications/National/Submissions/Children_and_Education_Submissions/Submission_to_Issues_Paper_1_on_the_Working_With_Children_Check/

Training and education key in protecting children

BY CLAIRE VICTORY

One of my clearest memories from the countless mandatory training sessions I attended during my time as a St Vincent de Paul Society kids' camp volunteer was an exercise we went through to explain our role as youth leaders.

The trainer had one person stand up, representing a child who might be attending one of our camps or activity days. She then had other people stand up, one by one, and place a hand on the shoulder of the 'child', each representing a person in that child's life. The first ones were easy to name: 'parent', 'grandparent', 'teacher' we'd suggest as the trainer asked us who we thought would have a role in that child's life. The numbers of hands on the child's shoulder grew as we thought more carefully about the other people that might be involved in the life of a disadvantaged or at risk child: 'foster parent', 'police officer', 'doctor', 'psychologist' and 'social worker'.

By the time we added our own hand, as a St Vincent de Paul Society volunteer, on the child's shoulder, that shoulder had become a very crowded place. It showed us two things: (1) a child on a kids' camp may already feel overwhelmed by all the adults involved in their life; (2) like a social worker or other professional carer, we had an opportunity and an obligation to look out for the child's best interests and respond to abuse or neglect if and when we became aware of it.

St Vincent de Paul Society members who attend kids' camps and activity days are well aware that they may, from time to time, have to make a report to the child abuse hotline or

otherwise respond to a disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. But it is not just youth members who may be confronted with child abuse or, for that matter, family and domestic violence; all Society members, especially those undertaking home visitation, may encounter children or other persons who are facing violence at the hands of others.

Being on the 'frontline' means we are in a unique position not only to advocate on behalf of the victims of family and domestic violence but also to respond with love, compassion and practical support and advice to those who don't know where to turn.

For a child who has been abused or who is being groomed as a victim, the St Vincent de Paul Society members who arrive at his home on a regular basis offering friendship and material support—or the youth leaders on a kids' camp—might be viewed as trustworthy adults in whom he can confide that there is another adult in his life who is making him feel unsafe.

For a woman who is trapped in a cycle of abuse—including, as it often does, elements of enforced isolation and emotional and financial dependence on her abuser—the Society members offering material support through home visitation or a Vinnies Shop might also be able

to offer her the strength, emotional support and advice she needs to remove herself and her children from the violent household.

As members, we should ensure we are equipped with knowledge about family and domestic violence and child abuse so that we can respond effectively if and when we suspect or are told that such abuse is occurring in the lives of those we assist. If you or your conference/special work would like more information about the Society's policies on these matters, or some training on how to identify or address child abuse or domestic violence, you can call the Society's head office or membership/training officer in your state/territory. You may also like to visit some websites which contain guidelines on responding to suspicions or disclosures of abuse, including:

- National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service www.1800respect.org.au
- Australian Institute of Family Studies – Child Family Community Australia aifs.gov.au/cfca/
- Child Wise National Child Abuse Prevention Helpline 1800 99 10 99 www.childwise.org.au ♦

Claire Victory is Deputy President of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia.



©ISTOCK.COM/MACTRUNK

Driving fairer access to higher education for all

Canberra student raises \$19,000 to help promote Clemente program

A former intern with the St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council office spent over three months sleeping in his car and raised over \$19,000 as part of a unique fundraiser for the Society in Canberra-Goulburn.

Joseph Frawley, 25, a law student at the Australian National University, began sleeping in his car on 20 July 2015 while he finished his law thesis over a 15-week period, finishing on 30 October 2015.

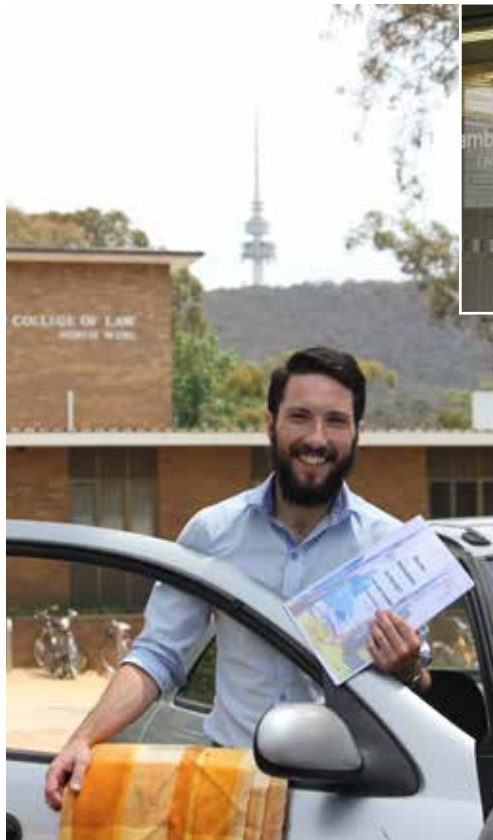
Joseph decided to raise money to help fund more student placements for the Clemente program after he learned about the free university education program the Society offers in partnership with the Australian Catholic University (ACU).

The Clemente program is run by the Society in Canberra-Goulburn, New South Wales and Queensland. It enables people who have experienced homelessness, family breakdown, addictions, disabilities or mental health problems to have a university education. The Clemente program hails from the United States and it is offered by other universities and charities around Australia.

Frank Brassil, president of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra-Goulburn, told the local ABC: 'Joseph's selfless dedication to making a difference in the community and giving a hand-up to people less fortunate is incredibly humbling.'

Joseph began his sleepout during Canberra's cold winter, and at the time he described some of the hardships that he was experiencing: 'It is very cold and uncomfortable. I don't sleep through the night and I'm forced to wake up with the sun or even earlier by the birds.'

He also explained the mental toll



Above: Joseph and Frank Brassil receiving a cheque for \$5,000 from Ron Lambert, Managing Director of Lambert Parkhill Financial Group

Left: Joseph with one completed Thesis.

'Joseph's selfless dedication to making a difference in the community and giving a hand-up to people less fortunate is incredibly humbling.'

Frank Brassil, president of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra-Goulburn

sleeping out takes, describing the impact of sleeping rough as like 'trying to see through fog—my mind is not as clear and sharp as it usually is.'

Joseph said that although the task had presented him with a number of difficulties, seeing the generosity of people around him had been very uplifting.

'People have been incredibly generous. Donations have exceeded expectations; people offered to help promote my cause through radio and writings, to run morning teas or yoga classes for the cause. It has restored my faith in the kindness of other people,' Joseph said.

After hearing about Joseph's extraordinary efforts in the media, Ron Lambert, Managing Director of Lambert Parkhill Financial Group said, 'I've done well in my business and

sharing a modest part of our business success to help people doing it tough to improve their situation feels like the right thing to do.' With a generous donation of \$5,000 Lambert Parkhill gave Joe's cause and moral a great boost!

Joseph had hoped to raise at least \$13,000 for the Clemente program—\$1 for each word of his thesis. But his fundraising efforts far outstripped his goal and, thus far, he has raised \$6,000 more than his aim.

Joseph completed his internship with the Society in 2014 under the guidance of Policy Advisor, Rik Sutherland. You can read about Joseph's amazing efforts at: <https://joesleepout.wordpress.com/> ♦

Donations can still be made on the St Vincent de Paul Society website at <https://www.vinnies.org.au/donate#!state=act&appeal=81>



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National Oral Health Alliance

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a member of the National Oral Health Alliance (NOHA), a group of 11 member organisations that advocates for improvements to oral and dental health in Australia.

THE NOHA aims to improve the situation for those who currently have particularly poor dental health, due largely to their inability to obtain timely and affordable oral care.

In its current campaign, the NOHA urges Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to work together to ensure every Australian has access to good oral health care. It offers its support to the Health Minister, the Hon. Sussan Ley MP, as she considers health system reform including the future of the Commonwealth's Healthier Medicare initiative.

The current oral health care system marginalises low income Australians,

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, those in rural and remote areas, and those living with chronic and complex conditions. On average Adult Australians have one of the lowest levels of oral health status in the OECD [the 34 member countries that make up the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development]. Additional investment in oral health care would result in substantial returns for individuals, families, workplaces and the nation.

In the lead-up to the 2016–17 Federal Budget, NOHA wants all government health agencies to recognise and support oral health care as a critical part of team-based primary care. There is no reason why the mouth and teeth should be quarantined from the rest of the body, nor from Australia's aspirational goal of universal healthcare available to everyone, everywhere, on the basis of health need only.

Giving children a healthy start to life is so important and targeted children's dental services need guaranteed

commitment and funding. NOHA urges the Minister to reinstate the previous funding levels for the Child Dental Benefit Scheme.

Where public dental health services are concerned, waiting lists are again blowing out after the injection of some much-needed additional funding in the recent past. This is as a result of the recent cessation of Commonwealth funding, and there is no guarantee of funding beyond this financial year.

Poor oral health costs individuals and the nation a great deal and, notwithstanding the fiscal circumstances, next year's Budget must include a strategic and long-term boost in funding.

These issues and related matters are currently being considered by the Health Minister, the Hon. Sussan Ley MP. The members of NOHA have offered their advice and support for the Minister's consideration of system reforms.

For more information on NOHA, visit www.oralhealth.asn.au ♦

You'll Never Walk Alone: A Vincentian Overseas

BY KEVIN SLATTERY

One of the many great but often unappreciated benefits of being a Vincentian is that wherever you travel, there is no need to feel alone, even as a single traveller. In the most unlikely of places (even Mongolia, where the Society was established in 2005) one is likely to find a Vincentian presence. Contact with headquarters in the country to which you are heading will invariably result in a warm welcome being offered with advice on how to link up with the locals and discover how they are pursuing their Vincentian ideals.

I have been fortunate in recent years to have made trips to France and England. International Headquarters in Paris was very happy to invite an Australian to meet with staff and tour the building—one of its outstanding features being the Mary McKillop Chapel, funded by our National Council.

Invitations were extended to meet up with conference members and to visit special works in Paris. Unfortunately much of the discussion at the two conference meetings I attended was too advanced for my limited French. An invitation to dinner by a conference member, however, revealed the work the conference was doing with a soup kitchen. Visitation is limited primarily to lonely or sick elderly.



Marjorie Lightfoot and Kevin Slattery visiting a Mini Vinnies group at Runcorn.

Such is the extent of the poverty in Paris, there is no way the Society could issue food vouchers and other material aid as we do in Australia.

Under the Madeleine Church in central Paris, a special work operates every Saturday. Here about 50 people in need are given a meal, can have a shower and are able to do their washing in the *lave-linges*, supported by young Vincentians.

No visit to Paris is complete without checking out the places with links to our founder and patron. This is made easy these days with the publication of *The Paris of St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam*. One of my favourite expeditions was a walk up Rue Mouffetard where Frédéric and companions started their visitations with a list of the poor given them by Sr Rosalie Rendu. Before each visit up the street, they spent time in prayer in the Church of St Medard, at the bottom of the street.

Over to England, where the Society was founded in 1844. The Society in Victoria has a special connection with Runcorn, in north England. It was from there that Englishman Fr Gerald Ward left in 1849 in response to a call from Bishop James Goold to assist in the Melbourne mission. Fr Ward obviously had knowledge of the Society from England and founded the first conference in Australia at St Francis, Melbourne in 1854. The present conference in Runcorn, under the dynamic leadership of Marjorie Lightfoot, makes Australian visitors especially welcome. A visit to Runcorn includes a tour of the places where Fr Ward ministered.

While lunching with conference members on a visit to Runcorn in 2009, I quietly enquired whether Mini Vinnies formed part of the structure of the Society in England. I can't remember the response but on my return to Australia, Marjorie Lightfoot



Kevin Slattery, third from left, with Runcorn Conference members, outside the home where Fr Gerald Ward lived when serving in Runcorn.

asked for any information relating to Mini Vinnies here to be sent to her. As a result, there are now more than 180 Mini Vinnies groups operating across England.

On a recent return to England, I was privileged to visit, with Marjorie, the local Mini Vinnies group at the Catholic primary school in Runcorn. They were bubbling with enthusiasm and keen to tell us about their many activities, which included visiting the elderly in nursing homes and regularly raising funds to support poor children's education in India and Peru. They confidently recited the opening and closing prayers. It was a humbling experience for the visitors. We are presently organising for Mini Vinnies groups in both countries to become pen pals.

While in London on the same trip, contact was made with the Chelsea Conference. I was invited to accompany them as they distributed

food parcels to about 40 homeless people sleeping on the streets of central London. On a previous visit, going to an East London soup van with 20 young and old Vincentians and volunteers was a highlight. The soup van was managed by 80-year-old Bill, who singlehandedly raises the £10,000 required each year to fund it by holding a ball and a sponsored bike ride to Hampton Court. Another example of how 'one person can make a difference'.

Frédéric Ozanam's aim was to establish a 'network of charity' across the world. Apart from the amazing success our international organisation has achieved in this regard, he would also be delighted that a 'network of connections' results from belonging to our Society. Being a Vincentian, no matter where you are, you'll never walk alone. ♦

Kevin Slattery is the SVDP Archivist for Victoria and Member, Hawthorn Conference, Melbourne.

Author's note on the terrorist attacks in Paris

Paris. The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in this beautiful city in 1833. To see such heartache spreading among our global friends is hard to fathom after the terrorist attacks on 13 November. My thoughts are with the friends I made while in Paris and I know that the whole Society stands in solidarity with the people of France and those from other nations caught up in these horrible events. I will continue to pray for the kind people I met during my time in France.

Making a difference in a changing world

BY DENIS FITZGERALD

'We are called constantly to improve and to grow in rapport and wisdom, in order to fully carry out mission.' Pope Francis

Rapid changes in the social services sector, the Church, Australian society, and the relations between government, not-for-profits and now for-profit providers, are causing our social service organisations to experience turbulence. For Catholic social services in Australia, this improvement and growth is occurring in a challenging environment.

In the western world, faith observance is on the wane and the influence and esteem that churches and Christian communities once enjoyed has also weakened over time. We used to mainly employ Catholics in our social service organisations, but no longer; and the days of religious running frontline services have largely gone.

Competitive social service markets and new forms of investment and measurement are being introduced in our sector and this is impacting on social service providers, faith-based or not. Observe the changes occurring across the sector, from the delivery of vocational education and training through to employment, disability and aged care services. Some of this change offers new opportunities, provides for more targeted resourcing and moves us beyond measuring activity through 'tick-a-box' reporting towards tracking on-mission impact. Importantly, with personalised packages of support and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, program participants are able to have more control over their own lives. We can also see, however, commercial interest outweighing



Catholic Social Services
Victoria

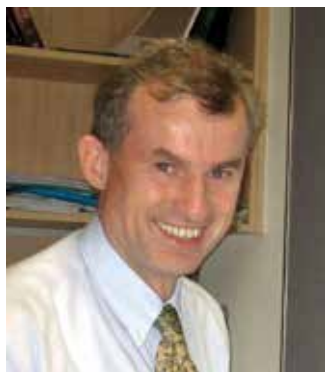
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Denis Fitzgerald

program quality in some sector developments: 'Would you like an iPad with your training course?'

Traditionally, government and not-for-profit charities have been seen as the natural place for the delivery of human services. During the last century, businesses also moved steadily into this space.

The chief executive of the Melbourne-based Brotherhood

of St Laurence, Tony Nicholson, recently warned of 'a welfare arms race in which the lion's share of government funding will go to super-sized welfare businesses'. Government is moving out, and the programs previously contracted to the community sector are in danger of being swept up in alternative market-based systems. The Productivity Commission found in 2010 that there were 59,000 economically significant not-for-profits in the system, contributing \$43 billion to Australia's GDP, and 8 per cent of employment. There are potentially profitable business opportunities in this significant sector of the economy. Moving from such 'human services' like the prison and detention systems, we will most likely see more international names such as G4S, Serco and GEO competing against



larger not-for-profits (with possibly less provider diversity overall).

This raises the question: does motivation for getting into social services provision matter?

It certainly makes a difference in terms of mobilising inputs. According to the Productivity Commission, around 4.6 million volunteers work with Australian not-for-profits (with a wage equivalent value of \$15 billion)—much of this relating to faith-based work. Donations similarly underpin much of our work. The St Vincent de Paul Society is at the forefront of both these developments.

Our commitment and our contribution go deeper than this. With humility and determination, we seek to give life to the call of the Gospels—articulated for our time by

the Second Vatican Council—to attend to the ‘joy and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties’ of all the community, with preference to those experiencing poverty.

So, rather than ‘circling the wagons’, Catholic social services providers want to engage with other denominations and faith-communities via a landmark conference to engage with the social challenges of our times for the common good of all.

In February 2016, the Catholic social services community in Australia will host a conference, ‘REVIEW, REIMAGINE, RENEW: Mission making a difference in a changing world’.

Leaders from across the sector will enable all participants to grapple with the big issues to help us renew our contribution to society in the current changing environment.

A keynote address from John L Allen Jr, noted international writer and journalist, will explore what a servant Church can be in a changing world. John will also lead a workshop on working with the media to advance mission. Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards will present on social sector leadership at a time of turbulence and Tony Nicholson from the Brotherhood of St Laurence will lead a workshop on new funding models for social services. Cathy McGowan MP will present on the opportunity for a more just and compassionate Australia. Dr John Falzon is also scheduled to present.

Social services are central to the mission of the Church in the world, so the community of interest for this conference is extensive. As well as the Catholic social services community itself, the conference extends to education, health and pastoral ministry, as well as social service leaders from all Christian denominations and other faith traditions.

The conference presents a great opportunity to gather to discuss the challenges we all face in our communities that are impacting so heavily on the most vulnerable in our society.

For more information on the 2016 national conference and for bookings, visit: www.css.org.au/MissionRenew. ♦

Denis Fitzgerald is Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria.

Causes of domestic violence, what it means for primary prevention

BY RIK SUTHERLAND

Tackling domestic violence is seen an issue of increasing importance in Australia, with Rosie Batty being named Australian of the Year and the Prime Minister's recent announcement of an additional \$100 million for service funding. In this paper, by national policy advisor Rik Sutherland, the deep causes of this violence are explored, and the implications for service delivery outlined.

In 2006, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey estimated that nearly 100,000 Australians, from all backgrounds and walks of life, experienced domestic violence in some form.

In exploring the deep causes of domestic and family violence, a starting point is an examination of just who is experiencing and who is perpetrating the crime. There are predictors that we know make intimate violence more likely, including the use of alcohol or drugs, being from a non-English-speaking background, and in the case of female victims, having a disability, being pregnant, and being on a low income.

The key theme: gender

The clearest and most consistent pattern in domestic violence is its gendering. For instances of violence not in self-defence, around 15 per cent of women experience domestic violence from a partner, compared with less than one per cent of men.¹ Tellingly, over the 10 years from



2000, in 238 cases of murder in a domestic violence context in NSW, there was not a single recorded case of a female domestic violence abuser killing a male. Australian studies have found men are also far more likely to use long term sexual and economic violence against women than women are against men. Moreover, not only partners are affected by men's choices to use domestic violence: children often experience trauma, resulting in detrimental impact on their development.

What themes make gender central to domestic violence?

Given these pervasive patterns of men's violence against their female partners, it is clear that the causes of domestic violence are more than a 'few bad apples'.

Australian and international studies have isolated three underlying factors that underpin domestic

violence-supportive attitudes: unequal distribution of power and resources in society between men and women; rigid, narrow, and binary gender roles, stereotypes and identities; and a culture that supports violence generally.²

Firstly, domestic violence occurs more in contexts where women have less economic and social capital; that is, where women are more vulnerable generally. Gender-based and disability-based discrimination also intersect here, and increase the risk of violence for women with disabilities, particularly psychological disability, and particularly from male partners who are also carers.

Secondly, men are more likely to engage in domestic violence against their female partners if they hold negative attitudes towards women generally, if they hold traditional gender-role attitudes that legitimise violence, or if men have low levels of support for gender equality broadly.

For example, we know that domestic violence is greater in contexts with traditional patriarchal ('macho') ideals of masculinity and strictly defined gender roles, including in regional Australia³ and among sporting subcultures.

A broad culture of inequality, gender roles and violence is not the only condition needed for individual acts of violence to occur. If it were, all men would be perpetrators. An interaction model posits that one factor isn't enough: it is not *just* being exposed to society's prejudices, use of alcohol, or witnessing violence as a child that leads to violence, but an interplay of conditions, with gender a necessary component in almost all cases, crystallised by the choice to use violence.

Responding to intimate partner violence at every level

To respond to and stop domestic violence, then, we need to consider whose responsibility it is. The first level of responsibility for male violence lies with the men who commit the violence. The second level lies with the people around that man who have some influence over him—his friends, parents and sporting community. Not with his partner, who by definition does not have influence over him. The third level lies with those responsible for shaping the attitudes of the broader community: from politicians who pass Budgets that reinforce economic gender inequity, Hollywood's fetishisation of violence, to workplaces that do not reward women the same as men, and all of us individually.

But in practice, what are the actions we need to take? Many of the following ideas are taken from conversations with a senior case worker in the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Firstly, women need a place to escape the immediate situation of domestic violence. This means increasing refuges available to women—we know that one in two women is currently turned away—as well as dealing with Australia's housing crisis, where less than one per cent of housing is affordable for people who are on the lowest incomes according to the Anglicare Rental Housing Affordability Snapshot released in April 2015. It also means increasing other forms of housing than refuges, particularly those that are child-friendly. The movement towards keeping women in their homes and removing perpetrators is positive, but seems limited to cases of physical violence. We know that Commonwealth Rent Assistance is inadequate, needing to be increased by at least \$25 per week, and there are more than 200,000 people waiting for social housing.

Secondly, we need more trained staff and aid case workers to employ outreach services that work with women, providing them with social support, educational programs and overall helping women navigate their options in dealing with domestic violence. We also need to work with perpetrators through counselling programs to change and accept responsibility for their behaviour. Going back, to prevent the violence from the beginning, we must teach healthy relationships and gender equality in our schools and communities.

But ultimately, to prevent domestic violence, we need to address the deep causes: rigid gender roles in society; structural power imbalances between men and women; and a culture that celebrates violence. For example, the St Vincent de Paul Society has called on the government to commit to a plan on gender equality, for a national approach to reducing the structural barriers that women face

to full economic, social and political participation, including considerations of the intersectionality of disadvantage such as disability, race, class and indigeneity that compound gendered inequality and stereotypes.

While we have come a long way, there is clearly still far to go. Two women dying a week (at 1 July 2015, 48 women this year) because of the choice by men in their lives to kill is something we will never accept. But domestic violence is really just the tip of the iceberg, with its roots in a cultural celebration of violence, disempowerment of women and strict gender stereotyping. Our work is thus intimately tied to, and we must stand in solidarity with, those fighting for gender equality, including equal pay and representation, those fighting to break down gender stereotypes at all levels, and those trying to end Australia's general tolerance and even celebratory attitude towards some types of 'masculine' violence. We can all of us, individually or in our communities at any level, help combat domestic violence, and so end one of the greatest injustices of our time. ♦

Rik Sutherland is Policy Advisor to the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia.

1. Queensland Government, *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*, <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/documents/getting-support-health-social-issue/dfv-report-vol-one.pdf>, 121.

2. Ibid; Victorian Government, *National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey- Research Summary* (2013) <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/2013-national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey>.

3. Parliament of Australia, *Domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia: an overview of the issues*, http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/ViolenceAust#_Toc401045301.

On the ground in Lebanon

BY ELLA SALHAB BITAR

Ella Salhab Bitar, President of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Lebanon, gives an account of the Society's work in Lebanon, which is experiencing an influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Lebanon was founded in 1860. Faithful to the Vincentian vocation, it provides assistance to the poor, with volunteers committed to social work on the whole Lebanese territory. The Society in Lebanon envisions a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted.

It is formed by 46 conferences, three of which were created in 2014–15, with approximately 800 volunteers spread all over the Lebanese territory.

It has responded to social changes, providing a range of additional services depending on prevailing needs.

Medical activities: Six community clinics including cardiac and ophthalmic care, healthcare campaigns in remote villages, four dental clinics, distribution of medicine and contributions to hospital care.

Social activities: Elderly clubs, seven third age restaurants (offering free hot meals), two homes for the elderly welcoming around 150 residents and family assistance.

Educational activities: Two nurseries and one school, three vocational training units, tutoring, summer camps and recreational activities.

Rural development projects: Apple production, lavender and thyme plantation,



Syrian refugees.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Lebanese conferences have served the refugees fleeing Syria as they serve any of the Lebanese families they help.

one catering entity, one traditional olive oil soap production and two craft workshops.

Emergency plans during war and crisis: Distribution of food, fuel, hygiene kits, blankets and more.

The refugee crisis

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Lebanese conferences have served the refugees fleeing Syria as they serve any of the Lebanese families they help. This is especially true in the conferences located in the

Bekaa Valley (the nearest region to the Syrian-Lebanese eastern border) and in the north-eastern suburbs of the capital, Beirut, where the refugees are concentrated.

Programs dedicated to refugees were often applied whenever funds were available. The National Council of Lebanon has sent specific projects fitting the refugees' needs to international NGOs seeking funds, and have been able to collect funds from the Holy See (Vatican), the Pontifical Mission (Lebanon), Aid to the Church in Need (Germany), l'Oeuvre d'Orient (France) and the International General Council of SSVF (France).

Help provided from these funds has included:

- food, including baby formula
- non-food items, such as blankets and gas oil for heating
- contributions to school fees



Syrian girls make Christmas drawings, decorations for parents at centre in Lebanon.



Iraqis collect bags of aid as they leave the Maronite Catholic Cathedral of the Resurrection in Rabieh, east of Beirut.

- contributions to hospitalisation charges
- Christmas festivities (including meals and entertainment, and the distribution of clothes and other gifts)

Two years ago, the National Council of Lebanon was asked by the Council General International to act as coordinator for the National Councils of Syria (in Aleppo, Damascus and Hassakeh) to transfer their requests for support, write projects and send them to the international headquarters or other NGOs.

Due to Syrian regulation that restricts money transfers, we also receive funds on their behalf and send them to Syria. Funds are used to purchase generators and gas oil, for water well drilling and school sponsorships, as well as distribution of food and non-food items such as blankets and medicines for a dialysis centre.

Lebanon is now home to the largest number of Syrian refugees per capita in the world.

The influx of refugees

Lebanon is home to deep-rooted political, cultural and religious complexities that frequently result in complicated conflicts. But it has always been a refuge and a haven for persecuted people. For example, in 1915 Lebanon opened its borders and provided refuge to countless Armenians. In 1947, after the partition of Palestine and the first Israeli-Arab war, Lebanon again opened its borders and welcomed more than 100,000 Palestinian refugees (10 per cent of the Lebanese population at the time).

Lebanon is now home to the largest number of Syrian refugees per capita in the world. Unfortunately, the host communities have reached their limits. Gone are the days when residents systematically opened their homes to refugees and shared their resources. There are simply not enough shelters to go around since the majority—85 per cent—of refugees live in local communities, outside camps and mostly in the poorest areas. This has put strain on the country's already-fragile infrastructure and social makeup. Tensions are soaring as Syrian refugees and Lebanese families compete for the same overstretched resources such as jobs, shelter and public services. About 25 per cent of Lebanon's population is made up of Syrian and Palestinian refugees—an extraordinary figure, unmatched anywhere else on earth. ♦

Ella Salhab Bitar is President of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Lebanon.

Sick with worry

BY DR JOHN FALZON

We often hear that business needs certainty. Fair enough. But certainty and the marketplace, especially the global marketplace, are not generally spoken of in the same sentence. The business community is well aware of this and looks to government to play a role in ensuring a degree of financial, social and political stability so businesses big and small can get on with the important task of economic activity.

But it's not just business that craves certainty. We all do. Some of us, however, are desperate for even a little taste of certainty because life has become completely overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty.

This happens, for instance, in the wake of acts of violence and dispossession. The First Peoples of Australia continue to live with the painful legacy of invasion and colonisation and this is reflected in the disproportionate numbers of First Peoples who are incarcerated. Being locked up follows hot on the heels of being locked out.

Similarly, the people who seek refuge on our shores are fleeing situations of unimaginable violence and horror. Ask them about uncertainty, especially while we keep them incarcerated in our shameful offshore limbos.

In addition, we know that on conservative estimates around 12 per cent of the population is living in a state of permanent recession and everlasting uncertainty.



Our Prime Minister has told us that we should embrace change rather than fear it. Sounds exciting, unless it means that we should give up so many of the progressive gains we have made as a society: fair wages and conditions in the work place, a social security system we should strengthen rather than denude, universal healthcare, public education and more.

It's true we should not be afraid in a time of change. But we should certainly resist change that takes us backwards, even when it is cloaked in the language of progress and modernity. Let's call a spade a spade. There's nothing innovative, for example, about removing penalty rates, forcing people who depend on them into deeper poverty. There's nothing innovative about scaling back our social security system either.

It's tempting for political leaders to blame people for being unemployed or underemployed, thereby justifying

a reduction in social expenditure. But this completely ignores the stark reality that welfare benefits don't cause unemployment any more than health care causes sickness. Unemployment is a structural problem, best addressed by a national jobs plan, not a putting-the-boot-into-the-unemployed plan or a ripping-up-the-minimum-wage-and-penalty-rates plan. The latter are just plans for punishing people who are already consigned to a life of uncertainty.

In Anti-Poverty Week in October, the St Vincent de Paul Society launched a new report on stories from the frontline of inequality in prosperous Australia. Stories of people who told us that poverty or the threat of poverty, homelessness or the threat of homelessness, unemployment or underemployment, housing unaffordability and utter uncertainty about the future—all of these things, any one of these things and any combination of these things—made them feel sick with worry.





There's nothing human about humiliating people because they are forced to survive on the fringes of the labour market. There's nothing smart about ramping up inequality and then blaming the people who are forced to bear its burden, supposedly so that the economy can grow, or it can be flexible, agile and attuned to changes in the global marketplace.

We are all injured when the public sphere is dismembered and the common good is wrecked; when people are forced into poverty, compelled to rely on charity when all they long for is justice. Cutting social expenditure is code for protecting those who will not pay their fair share. We might not be able to achieve equality of incomes but we should strive to achieve equality of outcomes. This is why we have taxation. This is why we have social expenditure. This is why we have unemployment benefits and a disability support pension and a national disability insurance scheme and Medicare and

public education. This is why we can actually arrest the growth in inequality rather than glorying in it. Because we are able to pool our resources to ensure no one misses out on the essentials of life.

But as inequality grows, there develops an expanded elite who argue that they are tired of doing the lifting so that the rest of us can do the leaning; that they can afford to pay for all they need, be it housing or health or education or safety, so why should they have to pay for those who cannot. They begin by driving the wedge at the margins of society and they attack not only the livelihoods of people experiencing unemployment and exclusion but their virtue as well, engulfing them with a moralising discourse on laziness and turpitude.

One of the courageous people who shared their story in our report is a prime example of this demonisation. A car accident left him with a severe disability, which led to him losing his

job and unable to find paid work. He said the thing that hurt him the most was not losing his job, but the political abuse fired at people like him. Although he was an active volunteer in the community since being unable to find paid work, he was deeply hurt when described in the political arena as a dole bludger who makes no contribution to society.

The economy is not the same thing as the market. Neither does it just mean business. It includes both, but should not be confused with either. Government has a key role to play in the economy. It is the means by which we can achieve collectively for all what we cannot achieve individually: a place to live, a place to work, a place to learn, a place to heal. It is the job of government not to abandon people to the inherent inequality of the market, but to achieve collectively what markets cannot. ♦

Dr John Falzon is Chief Executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council.

Stories from the front-line of inequality

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia national report, *'Sick with worry...'* *Stories from the front-line of inequality* is the result of more than 70 interviews our members conducted with the people the St Vincent de Paul Society assists across Australia to find out their most pressing concerns. Names have been changed to protect people's privacy. The report includes 14 recommendations to government on issues of housing, health and job creation. Key recommendations from the report include the following:

- The Federal Government should commit to a National Jobs Plan alongside comprehensive plans for housing and health. The Federal Government must take the lead on

tackling homelessness, including increased investment and minimum four-year funding commitments to the National Partnership on Homelessness. Housing taxation must be reformed and minimum wage and penalty rates be maintained and strengthened.

- All government services must be properly funded, including those for survivors of domestic violence so they can stay in their homes, free community GPs, Indigenous and rural health services, primary and secondary education and all other social services.
- Income support must be adequate and non-stigmatising. Newstart must be increased by at least \$50 per week

immediately and all payments should be indexed to wages instead of CPI. Other measures include scrapping Compulsory Income Management, increasing rent assistance and putting parents on Parenting Payment. The report contains some sobering stories of poverty and inequality in prosperous Australia, finding overwhelmingly that people do not experience poverty because they choose to but as a result of a range of structural causes which push them to the margins. Even while experiencing this exclusion, however, what people want most is to participate in and contribute to society.

The following are some real life stories featured in the report:

Veronica, a single mother aged 36, lives with her children in Canberra. Veronica was receiving Parenting Payment, but when her youngest child turned eight she was put on Newstart and Family Tax Benefit A, resulting in a lesser payment.

Rent in the unit is \$515 per week and Veronica has been living there for 3 years. She keeps the house very tidy and clean. However, Veronica has always had trouble keeping up with the rent payments, particularly when other bills are due. Now, the landlord has said they will be evicted.

Luckily, Veronica has found cheaper private accommodation in another suburb at \$450 per week.

Mitchell is 58 years old. He worked continuously in the IT industry until his retrenchment three years ago. For two years, he continued his modest lifestyle, living in private rental accommodation. During this time, he applied for over one thousand jobs.

A year ago, with his assets exhausted, Mitchell joined Newstart. His poverty is such that he walks up to seven kilometres in all weather to attend his appointments with the job-finding agency. His landlord has been allowing a much reduced level of rent, but is now suggesting that more needs to be paid.

Mitchell is always impeccably dressed and well-spoken. His hope is to get a job. He is very critical of job-finding agencies that he must attend to ensure his Newstart payments: he says the system is not working.

In their hometown in regional Victoria, Claire and Matthew lived at a caravan park. When Claire had to be flown to Melbourne to undergo an emergency caesarean section, Matthew asked the manager of the caravan park if they could leave their belongings in their van until they returned. He had no idea how long this would be. The caravan park manager demanded they pay 4 weeks' rent in advance to secure their van. Matthew had no money and could not meet this demand, and as a result their van was emptied of all their belongings. They are now homeless.

The *'Sick with worry...'* *Stories from the front-line of inequality* report is available to read and download online: <http://bit.ly/1lzRkPM>

A private man with a masterful public image

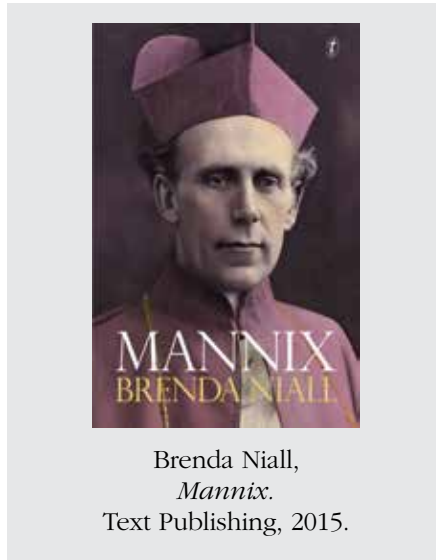
BY ANDREW HAMILTON SJ

To many older readers Mannix will be the tall, enormously old man in a purple biretta, who buffeted our cheek at Confirmations and spoke at fetes. His themes were the wrongs of Ireland, the injustice of denying public funding to Catholic schools, and the Communist risk. We are likely to identify him as an impregnable wall against change in society and Church.

To be judged as reactionary, of course, is the fate of those who grow old. It takes a good historian to go behind the image and recover the living person. Mannix is fortunate in his latest biographer, Brenda Niall. She takes us far beyond the caricatures of him as authoritarian and intransigent Catholic or as political reactionary.

Mannix was a private man with a masterful public image. Niall gives full weight to his dramatic public self-presentation—the top hat or biretta and cassock, the gift for eloquent, rhythmic prose with the deadly phrase and the telling pause. He could control an audience and shift the perception of events. He turned high seriousness, such as his arrest at sea, into farce. All that he did was theatre, laden with symbol. The imperial Mannix was impenetrable but penetrating.

Beneath this mask, however, Brenda Niall allows us to glimpse the face of a complex human being who won popular affection as well as respect. The British reprisal killings after the Easter Uprising in Limerick changed him. They sharpened his mistrust of



England and of the motivation behind the Great War into a barely controlled rage. He argued fiercely against conscription in the 1917 Referendum, and railed against the exploitation of struggling workers by the wealthy. After the War he endorsed Sinn Féin against limited home rule, and travelled to the United States to support de Valera. He was the international face of the Irish struggle.

Through this period he moved from being a distant Bishop to the hero of tribal Catholics who were mostly working class. His contrarian, almost bolshie streak, shows itself elsewhere in his disdain for church leadership, particularly as shown by Rome and its emissaries. His sympathy for the underdog was consistent—for Jews under Hitler, for workers, for immigrants and refugees. It also fuelled his opposition to Communists, whom he saw as persecuting the poor in Russia, killing nuns in Spain, and manipulating workers in Australia.

Mannix focussed on what mattered. This showed in his neglect of what mattered less to him: such things as entertaining and being entertained, using the telephone, attending to his own comfort, encouraging popular devotional practices and developing

amicable relationships with church leaders of other churches. But it was also shown positively in his prosecution of the causes that did matter: Irish freedom from British rule, the encouragement of an active Catholic laity, a just Australia, and a Church free from clericalism and sanctimonious speech.

In pursuing his goals he showed extraordinary trust in the often young men who came to him with projects they were ready to give their lives to: Éamon de Valera in the Irish cause, the founders of the Catholic Worker, Bob Santamaria in his understanding of Catholic Action, and the 15-year-old Percy Jones in his plan to become a priest, study church music in Rome, and return to animate church music in Melbourne.

Mannix's focus on what mattered took away anxiety about detail. He declined to visit his priests because it could express a lack of trust in them. He was also ready to let go of projects he strongly supported, such as sex education in schools and serious formation of Religious, if those responsible resisted implementing them. He could also let go of past enmities, befriending in later life Billy Hughes, just as Malcolm Fraser—another private, decent man—made peace with Gough Whitlam.

On finishing Brenda Niall's splendid biography I imagined the then Archbishop meeting the now Pope. Both are masters of public symbols. But whereas Mannix put on the trappings of office to conceal his inner life, Pope Francis discards them to reveal his loves and his desires. He is as expressive as Mannix was impressive. I suspect each would have recognised the other's mastery of performance and warmed to the performer. ♦

Andrew Hamilton SJ is a consulting editor of the Eureka Street news website: www.eurekastreet.com.au.

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