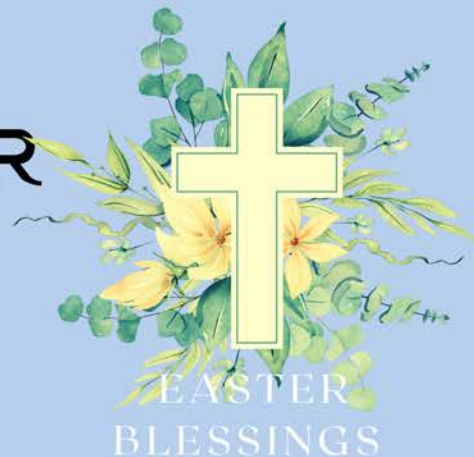




# NEWSLETTER

St Vincent de Paul  
Canterbury Area Council  
Easter 2025



From Mike Moore  
Christchurch Area President

**Dear Vincentians, Volunteers, Friends, Sponsors and Supporters  
Happy Easter!**

This Easter edition features an introduction to our Regional Representative (Brian Hutching) who represents the Canterbury, Mid & South Canterbury and West Coast regions at the National Board level. He has also shared his thoughts on his recent attendance at the National AGM of Vinnies in Tauranga. Other highlights include the Young Vinnies Mass held last week, some interesting stats on our Welfare programmes and we farewell our GM (Robyn Casey). Robyn leaves with our best wishes! Obituaries for Claude Sisson and Rodger Hodgins also feature.

May I again thank all our supporters for their generosity to the Society as the cost of providing support to our clients needing help continues to increase. Our welfare programmes not only provide food for many families but also extends to assistance with clothing, bedding & furniture along with many other needs. We continue to support our schools / students with assistance including school uniforms, school fees & other costs, breakfast clubs, and IT equipment.

To our support staff and volunteers – both in our shops and conferences – thank you for your continuing work that enables the wheels of the Society to keep turning and allow us to achieve our mission of 'helping those in need.'

May I conclude by wishing you and your families, a very blessed and happy Easter.  
God Bless

Mike Moore  
Area President



# Brian Hutching

our newly appointed Regional Representative



Late last year, Brian was appointed to this new role – a voluntary position – that covers Canterbury, West Coast and Mid / South Canterbury. This role is to represent our region at the National Board level – to bring our issues and concerns to the table and after each meeting to communicate the results / decisions back to our members.

Brian joins the reps from 5 other regions and this initiative concludes the governance amendments that were implemented in 2024 for the National Vinnies Board.

Brian – a Vincentian in the Cathedral Conference – is married to Mary. They have 3 children and 5 grandchildren. Brian attended New Brighton Catholic School and St Bede's College. Brian is a trained teacher and has most recently taught at Catholic Cathedral College and Linwood College being assistant HOD in English for both colleges. In addition, he has mentored newly appointed teachers and assisted students with learning abilities. At Linwood College, he was later appointed as HOD English that involved leading a group of 10 teachers, planning & organising schemes of work for Year 9 to 13 students plus visiting class rooms to inspect teaching methods and reporting back to teachers.

Following his retirement, Brian is still actively involved with relief teaching and is one of the welfare request allocators in the Cathedral Conference.

## Message of the Holy Father Francis for Lent

inspired by the Jubilee 2025 theme "Pilgrims of Hope," encourages Catholics to "journey together in hope," emphasizing the importance of walking with others and embracing a synodal approach to faith, while also reflecting on the call to conversion.



“...TO SERVE THE POOR  
IS TO GO TO GOD...”

St. Vincent de Paul



# WELCOME

## To our new Conference Presidents

### **Rob Kent - Beckenham**

Rob was born in Hobart, Tasmania and came to NZ many years ago being employed by Woolworths / Countdown and Foodstuffs. He has over 30-years in the grocery business where he focused on sourcing non-food products. He & his wife Rosemary moved to Chch (from Auckland) early in 2024. They have two sons who live in Australia. Rob will take over the Presidency of Beckenham in mid-April 2025.

**OUR THANKS to Denise for her leadership and amazing efforts in the Beckenham Conference.**



### **Robert Tait - Addington**

Robert put up his hand to lead the re-established Addington Conference. He (& his wife Margaret) recently arrived in Canterbury from Invercargill to be closer to their family. Rob is new to Vinnies so he will need some guidance & assistance in the coming months. Robert is from South Africa having taught at the Marist brothers and more recently taught at Verdon Catholic College in Invercargill. Thank you, Rob for putting up your hand! I am sure you will get lots of support.

**And a big THANK YOU to Lew Corbett for your many years of leadership at Addington!**



### **Maurice Lawlor - Cathedral**

Maurice joined Vinnies 5 years ago and has ever since been extremely active. He had a long career in IRD where he had numerous roles that included 'business transformational change' programme. Maurice is an active member of the Cathedral Parish where he is a member of the Senior Leadership Team plus other parish groups. Since joining Vinnies, Maurice has been actively involved in the recruitment of new members, has assisted in the re-establishment of Addington, plus an involvement in recruitment activities for Cathedral & Stella Maris Conferences. Many will recall Maurice's video session on recruitment at our 2024 Festival Day.

**And a big THANK YOU to Bruce for your excellent leadership of the Conference!**



# Young Adults / Young Vinnies

Commissioning Mass - 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025

A highly successful Commissioning Mass for our Young Vinnies and Youth was held at the auditorium of Catholic Cathedral College in Christchurch on 8th April. This annual event was presided over by Bishop Michael Gielen with the assistance of Fr Chris Orr.

Bishop Michael spoke to our Young Vinnies & Youth telling them that the hymn we sang "we are the children of God" brings a responsibility to help others. He thanked the Young Vinnies for taking up the role.

During his sermon, he spoke about the importance of Faith, Hope & Charity (love) and that our Young Vinnies would be demonstrating these 3 gifts of God when they support or serve the poor. He stressed the need to have courage and to know that when they serve others, they are not alone!



A very special thanks go to the Choir from Our Lady of Victories school to the readers and students assisting with the Offertory procession, plus, all others involved in making the day such a success. Thank you to Lee Nainai, the Principal of Catholic Cathedral College and Mathew Harris, the school's Director of Religious Studies for allowing Vinnies to use the College Auditorium.

**Finally, thanks to our Young Vinnies Coordinator, Cyrene and his team of volunteers for organising this amazing event!**



Young Vinnies, Youth, parents, Vincentians and supporters fill the auditorium

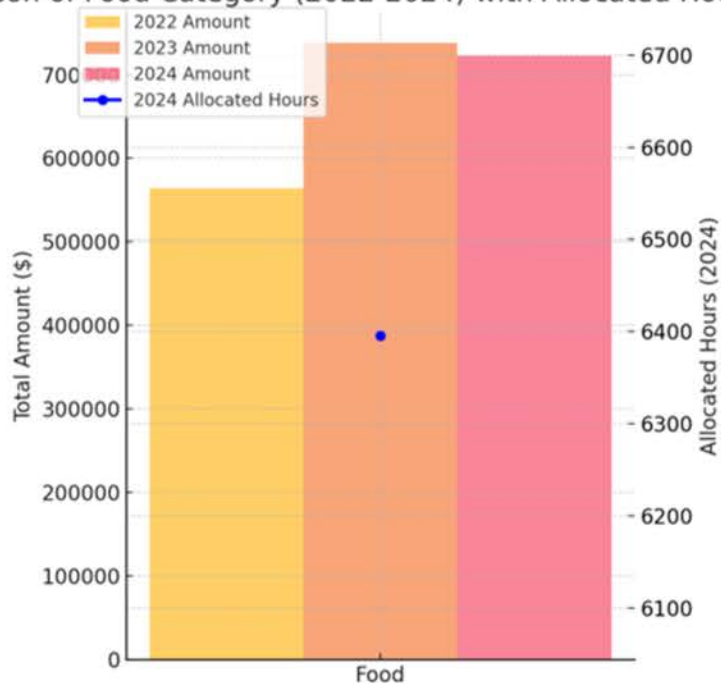
# WELFARE AT VINNIES



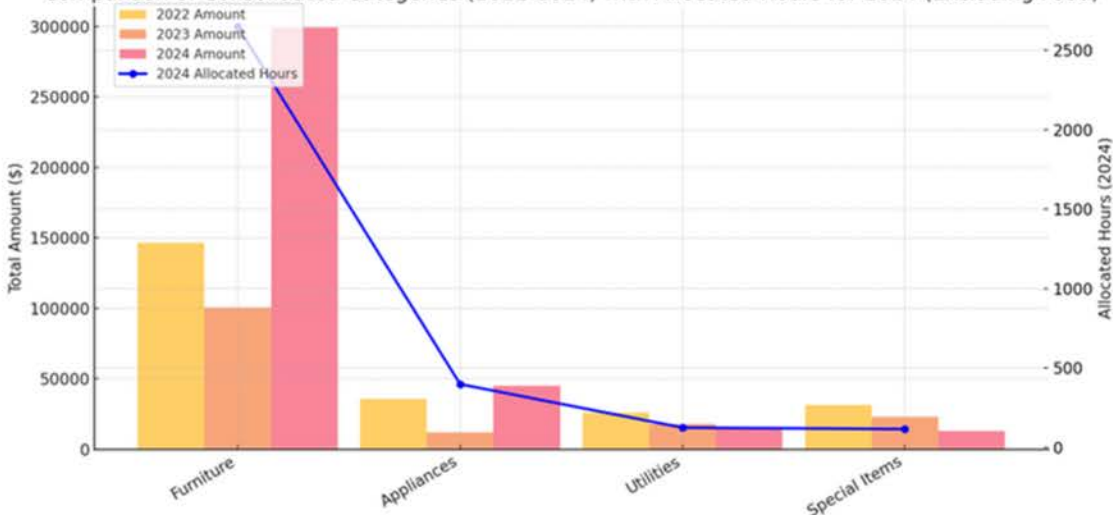
Welfare demand at Vinnies during 2024 continued at a similar level to the previous year. We received some 8,600 requests during 2024 from families and households in need that resulted in nearly 9,700 separate requests being managed that were valued at over \$1 million

When these families and households were contacted – these needs represented support for adults and children. In addition to supporting families and households in various ways, Vinnies also have a 'school's assistance programme' where Vinnies assists a number of schools each year. This support includes the payment of school/activity fees, provision of school uniforms, assisting with IT equipment and .....

Comparison of Food Category (2022-2024) with Allocated Hours for 2024



Comparison of Consolidated Categories (2022-2024) with Allocated Hours for 2024 (Excluding Food)



Distribution of non-food items by value and hours volunteered

Graph 1: Food supplied by value and hours volunteered  
 Graph 1 above shows the volumes and value of food distributed to those in need between 2022 and 2024.  
 Graph 2 shows non-food items (such as furniture, appliances etc) by number and value over the 2022 – 2024 period.

# Please "Help us to Help Others."

You can assist the Society in several ways!

- Donating to the Society to aid its good works including its Christmas activities.
- Donating food, clothing or furniture – email Vinnies – [admin@svdpcanterbury.nz](mailto:admin@svdpcanterbury.nz)
- If you would like to make a financial donation – use the link below to donate:  
• [www.svdpcanterbury.nz/donations](http://www.svdpcanterbury.nz/donations)
- or, scan the QR code opposite and it will take you to Vinnies website – donation page



'THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY'

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## A Prayer for Holy Week

Heavenly Father as we walk through Holy Week, open our hearts to witness your Son's sacrifice anew. In the noise of daily tasks and worldly concerns, help us pause and turn our thoughts toward Calvary.

Lord Jesus, You carried Your cross out of love for us. May each step we take this week honour Your journey. Let our Lenten sacrifices unite with Your suffering, and remind us of the price paid for our salvation.

Holy Spirit, guide us through these solemn days. From Palm Sunday's hosannas to Easter morning's joy, keep our souls attentive to the mystery of redemption, that we might die and rise with Christ in glory.

Amen



# Good-bye to our GM, Robyn Casey & thank you!



Robyn, who joined Vinnies late in April 2021, barely had time to settle into her new role when Covid-2 arrived! It meant much of NZ closed including our Vinnies shops. The exception being that our essential support for those in need continued. Robyn's co-ordination of our food parcel service was amazing! The preparation and distribution of these food parcels was up and running within 3-days and the process ran like a well-oiled machine!

Robyn has become well known locally by those in charitable services and across the Vinnies network where she is very well respected.

One of Robyn's highlights was the building and furnishing of the Ozanam apartments on Pavitt Street that were opened in early 2023 by Bishop Michael. Coordinating and assembling the furnishings proved to be a challenge – aided by the Brady's – but all worked out well for the official opening!

During her time at Vinnies, Robyn recalls the occasion when she received her first "good news story" about a man who had cared for his 3-kids with support from Vinnies. With the family grown up, he now wanted to give back to Vinnies as a result of the support we had provided years ago!

Finally, a big thank you to Robyn for her leadership and the many, many hours of hard work at Vinnies. We thank you and appreciate all you have done for the Society that is now in a much better place than when you arrived! We know that as you go forward in life, you will always be a "Vinny" at heart! With Best Wishes.

## Acting Arrangements –

Polly Fisher (former Retail Manager) has been appointed as Operations Manager, Retail & Logistics following the resignation of Robyn Casey.

Polly will fill this role until a decision on future roles and appointment(s) at Vinnies are made in mid-year. We wish Polly every success in this new role and assure her she will have the full support of the Board Members, our staff and our volunteers.



# Farewell Speech to Robyn

..... by Polly Fisher

Firstly, I would like to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to Robyn for the incredible work she has done over the past four years in running Vinnies and we cannot thank you enough for all your hard work and commitment.

As you embark on this new and exciting adventure, we want to wish you nothing but the very best. I have no doubt that you will continue to excel and thrive in everything you do, and I'm certain that you will enjoy every moment of this new chapter.

While we are excited for you, we will certainly miss you here at Vinnies. We hope you take with you fond memories of the work we've all done together, and the relationships we've built.

Please, don't be a stranger – keep in touch with us. You will always be part of the Vinnies family, and we sincerely wish you all the best in your future endeavours. Thank you once again, Robyn, for everything.

Let us pray.....

"Loving God, we gather today to thank you for the service of Robyn with us. We are grateful for her dedication, hard work, positive attitude and for all the contributions Robyn has made to our workplace. As Robyn embarks on this new chapter, we ask for your blessings and guidance. May Robyn find joy and fulfilment in her future endeavours.

We pray that she may always be surrounded by your peace and love. We entrust Robyn to your care, knowing that you will guide her on her path.

Amen."





# Vinnies National AGM

by Brian Hutching

I came away from the National AGM inspired to carry the important messages that were discussed and debated over the two days at Tauranga. This was my first AGM and I found the discussions during the break times to be very useful for making new contacts and putting names to faces.

At first I imagined that the first day was mainly concerned with housekeeping but looking over my rough notes there were areas which went beyond that. In particular Frank Brassil's commentaries and sharing of his thoughts about how we operate SVdP in New Zealand with his thoughts and views seeming to resonate with the wider group.

A Health and Safety report was timely and reminded us of our duty of care not only for our clients but also for ourselves as SVdP volunteers. I liked the suggestion that conference meetings should set aside a safety moment. I'd like to know more about this and how we might exercise this during our meetings.

The shop system, bank accounts issues, a relook at Rules Part 3 as well as acknowledgement of the importance of youth input have been, no doubt, visited before but were important talking points.

The Australian representative, Frank Brassil, outlined a number of challenges to our New Zealand situation.

He suggested that we have a flawed governance structure because the National Council is too big. Twenty-one on the National Council is too big for getting consensus. Frank also said that the Council should be meeting monthly instead of twice a year. In Australia, the shops were taken over by their National Council who appointed a National Retail Manager. This resulted in standardising the layout & branding with the shops doubling their profits. This option should be seriously considered in New Zealand. As well as shop issues, there were deemed to be too many bank accounts. Whilst this number has reduced in recent years, the number of accounts is still too large. In the Treasurer's view the ideal would be "one bank account with sub-accounts" that should suffice for each Area Council". This will also encourage conferences to see themselves as more unified and not so much as separate entities. The Xero accounting software should be utilised across all conferences.

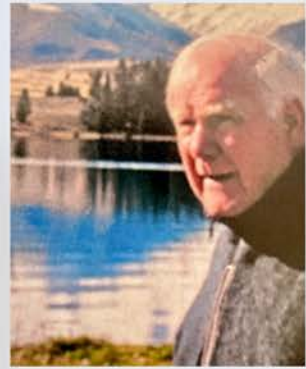
The theme of the AGM was 'Refounding'. This theme was teased out more thoroughly on the Sunday by Gerry Stevens who outlined his thoughts in a written piece which he shared with the meeting. In essence, refounding is a way of being able to rediscover the Mission of the Society.

The impetus for this process is particularly driven by the realisation that our membership has fallen drastically in the last 10 years. There is no one reason for this but a number of factors are contributing. Membership has fallen alongside a parallel decline in church attendance with many baptised Catholics no longer practising their faith. The AGM discussed these issues. The ways in which 'Refounding' can be implemented was discussed and an "Action Plan" developed. Details will be published when received from our National Office.



# Obituaries

**Claude Sissons** - Claude was a Vincentian at Stella Maris for some years and was one of the early residents at Nazareth House in Christchurch. He was actively involved in the activities of the village and spent some time setting up the Residents Association at Nazareth. Claude was highly respected for his great organisational skills and enjoyed being a part of the Walking group and the Merrymakers. I got to know Claude in the years he was both Area Treasurer and Board member under the reign of Mike Daly as Area President. Claude also supported our fundraising activities, and it was great to see him again at the official opening and blessing by Bishop Michael of the Ozanam apartments in Pavitt Street in 2023.



Claude passed away on 24 February 2025 after an illness and had a great send off at his requiem mass on 4th March. His sons Hamish and Daryl both spoke very highly of Claude, not only about all his achievements during his life but his attitude to life which was always positive plus his great love of family. Thank you, Claude for all your great work for Vinnies over the many years. May you rest in peace.

## **Rodger Hodgins – RIP** by John Doocey

Many of us have enjoyed Rodger Hodgins company and news of his death has caused great sadness. Rodger began his Vincentian time as a volunteer at the Papanui shop. His skill at repairing things, in particular his talent with furniture, was a great asset. After a few years at Papanui, Rodger answered an SOS to work on the truck. He collected many gifts from those donating goods to the Society and took great joy in meeting these folks in their homes. Discussing their gardens, their families and viewing tool sheds, Rodger was always grinning and yarning with those he meet. His best efforts however were in his interactions with those referred by conference members in need of assistance.

Rodger had known a few hiccups in life, most notably a motorcycle accident that left him with daily discomfort and ended his career.

Rodger understood the difficulty those he meet faced in their challenges. His empathy and care for those he served at Vinnies has left a great legacy.

Rodger did his work quietly, never talked of his pain and has left all the better for having met him. Please remember Rodger, his son and his daughter in your prayers. Rest in peace Rodger!

## **Let us pray for past members of the St Vincent de Paul Society who have died recently.**

*For all our fellow Vincentians.  
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May the souls of the faithful departed,  
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.  
**Amen***



### **Blessing**

As we go on our way, May God go with us. May he go before us to show the way, Behind us to encourage, beside us to befriend, above to watch over, And within to give us his peace. Amen