



St Vincent de Paul Society
CANBERRA/GOULBURN
good works

Membership Strategy

2026 – 2029



REFLECTION

As Vincentians we are privileged to enter the lives of so many people we assist, to listen to their stories, to offer prayer, presence and physical comfort. We do so in the knowledge that we are doing God's work. While we may not always see the long-term impact of our efforts, we know we make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people we assist. As Jesus taught in Matthew 25:40, *"whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

It is this intimate local involvement in the lives of the people we assist, which lies at the heart of being a Vincentian. It is critical and valuable work, it is Good Work for which we need to invite others to join us.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our conferences (which consists of Conference Members) are a diverse group of people who carry out the 'good works' of the Society in the ACT and surrounding region. They are the backbone of the Society; helping companions (the people we support) in a number of ways and giving them a 'hand up' to make life-changing decisions. Conference Members also determine the strategic direction of the Society and how best to provide our programs and services to people in need.

The Society was founded by Frédéric Ozanam, a 20 year-old university student, who was challenged by an anti-religious peer to show what the Catholic faith was doing for the poor. Frédéric, and six friends were inspired by those experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty in Paris, to form the first "Conference of Charity" in 1833. They formed the St Vincent de Paul Society, with Saint Vincent de Paul as patron, known for his charitable works. Frédéric Ozanam sought the guidance of Rosalie Rendu of the Daughters of Charity. The Society grew quickly and spread around the world and to Australia in Melbourne in 1854. The Society commenced in Goulburn in our Archdiocese in 1895, and 2025 marks 130 years of service to the community.

The Membership Strategy will ensure the ongoing vitality and sustainability of our membership by:

- Increasing the diversity of membership by age, gender and culture
- Achieving 10% growth in membership over the next four years
- Responding to community needs by establishing new, or strengthening existing, conferences
- Improving onboarding, orientation, mentoring support, recognition and engagement for new and existing members
- Building the capacity of conferences through training, collaboration, resource sharing, and improved communication
- Providing more opportunities for interaction between members and volunteers, and
- Recognise the aging face of membership and required targeted growth in areas where conference members are lacking in numbers or ability to deal with complex cases.

This strategy recognises members as a mission driven workforce working alongside volunteers and employees to respond to poverty, disadvantage and homelessness in our communities.

Over the next four years (to June 2029), the Strategy will create a more diverse, vibrant, and growing membership, ensuring the Society will continue to give service to the people we assist that is relevant and impactful.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Mission

The St Vincent de Paul 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.

Vision

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering a hand up to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.

Virtues

Bringing our vision to life and fulfilling our mission begins with an affirmation of the five essential virtues for Vincentians.

Simplicity

Frankness, integrity, genuineness

Humility

Accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents and charisms; yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others, and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace

Gentleness

Friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, sweetness and patience in our relationship with others

Selflessness

Dying to their ego with a life of self-sacrifice; members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity

Zeal

A passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person

Values

Our values bind us together and guide our behaviours, our decision making, and how we work with each other and our stakeholders.

Commitment

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values

Compassion

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement

Respect

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions

Integrity

Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values

Empathy

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception

Advocacy

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice

Courage

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future

RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING A NEW MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY

As we navigate an increasingly dynamic social and economic environment, it is essential to reassess and modernise our membership approach. Several key factors have prompted this initiative:

Current membership model

Our existing membership model has served as a foundational element of our organisation for several years. However, it is primarily focused on recruitment and does not sufficiently address critical components such as member retention, ongoing support, or the provision of resources to strengthen the capacity of our conferences or ensuring continuity of service as our membership ages. As a result, the model no longer reflects the evolving needs, cultural diversity and expectations and capacity of our members.

Commitment to diversity and inclusion

We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive membership that reflects the communities we serve. This Strategy focuses on removing barriers to participation and creating inclusive pathways that enable people of different ages, cultures, abilities, life stages and lived experiences to engage meaningfully in conference life. By strengthening accessibility and belonging, we seek to ensure conference membership is representative, welcoming and enriched by diversity.

Sustainability and long term growth

A resilient and future-focused membership strategy is critical to the health of our organisation. This Strategy focuses on sustainable growth and is responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. Growth within targeted areas in which conference numbers are not able or who are struggling to meet the community demand and the complexities of the people we assist.

Strengthening opportunities for youth and young adults

Strengthening opportunities for young people to join conferences is essential to the long-term sustainability of the Society. This Strategy recognises the need to create contemporary, supported and meaningful pathways that enable young Vincentians to engage in conference life and the breadth of Vincentian good works. By fostering intergenerational connection and intentional integration, the Society can nurture a new generation of Vincentians who are deeply connected to the mission and values of conference work and equipped to carry this work into the future.

Increased support for members and conference capacity

We recognise the need to go beyond recruitment by offering continuous support and tailored resources that help our members grow and thrive. Recognition of the aging face of members and the need to maintain continuity of service by increasing membership numbers.

This strategy serves as the foundation for the Implementation Plan, which will detail the actions, timelines, and measurable outcomes required for its effective implementation.

Goal 1: Membership is embedded in leadership, governance and culture

Our leadership actively recognise the contribution of members and actively promote member involvement, set expectations and grow membership

Action	Lead
Support conferences with recruitment readiness	Regional Presidents Conference Support Team
Review and update governance policies to include member participation, including co-designing policies with member representatives	Member Working Group Conference Support Team
Increase community awareness of the significance and depth of conference work	Conferences Conference Support Team

Measure

- Member responsibilities documented in position descriptions and organisational policies
- Governance frameworks that include policy and procedures supported by guidelines for members' information
- Clearly defined definition of conferences, with resources promoting the work that conferences do with community, people we assist and prospective members

Goal 2: Member participation is championed and modelled

Commitment to membership is embedded in our vision, planning, and resource allocation.

Action	Lead
Increase visibility of members and the work of conferences	Conferences Conference Support Team
Foster leadership and succession planning for members and conferences	Territory Council Conference Support Team
Engagement of members' input into the strategic plan	Territory Council
Engagement of conferences in annual budget for membership resources and services	Conference Presidents Conference Treasurers Conference Support Team

Measure

- Suite of promotional material which reflects and raises awareness of conference work
- Strategic plans include membership objectives co-designed with members
- Conferences are actively involved in developing their annual budgets

Goal 3: Member recruitment is inclusive and equitable

Recruitment initiatives attract and welcome diverse members, valuing equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Action	Lead
Design inclusive recruitment campaigns	Regional Presidents Conference Presidents Conference Support Team
Develop a new comprehensive member and conference library of resources	Conference Support Team
Design clear pathways between volunteering and membership	Conferences, Volunteer Team Conference Support Team
Strengthen opportunities for young people to join conferences is vital for the long-term sustainability of the Society.	Youth Conference Conference Support Team

Measure

- Membership recruitment plan aligned with National Recruitment Strategy
- A suite of resources developed and available on Member Connect
- Targeted outreach initiatives to diverse communities across our regions

Goal 4: Members are supported and recognised

Members are equipped with the knowledge, resources, and support to participate confidently and effectively.

Action	Lead
Training, mentoring, resources and guidelines to be developed for Presidents and Treasurers	Conferences Conference Support Team
Assess member development and training needs through annual surveys	Territory Council Conference Support Team
Allocate time and support for experienced members to mentor and support new members	Regional Presidents Conference Presidents
Recognise the great contribution members make to the work of the Society and the people we support	Conferences Conference Support Team

Measure

- Onboarding materials, induction sessions and policies available to members
- Member reviews or consultations identifying upskilling needs
- Support mechanisms; mentorship, peer engagement, regular check-ins

Goal 5: Member safety and wellbeing is prioritised

The organisation actively protects members' wellbeing and safety to ensures they understand their rights and responsibilities.

Action	Lead
Provide and inform members of all insurance and safety policies and procedures	Conference Support Team
Ensure feedback and complaint mechanisms are clearly communicated to members and relevant staff	Territory Council Conference Support Team
Review incident reports quarterly with Territory Council to identify any trends and improvements	Territory Council Conference Support Team

Measure

- All members have completed WHS and Safeguarding Training
- Team-building or engagement activities for members and staff
- WHS policies on Member Connect
- Complaint pathways explained during onboarding and readily available
- Consistent incident reporting and follow up learning actions

Goal 6: Membership systems are continuously improved

Membership systems are guided by best practice and regularly reviewed for improvement and innovation.

Action	Lead
Launch the Membership Strategy with conferences	Territory Council Regional Presidents Conference Support Team
Launch member feedback tool (survey or forum)	Territory Council Regional Presidents Conference Support Team
Annual review and report to Territory Council on the Membership Strategy to inform annual implementation plans	Territory Council Conference Support Team
Support conferences with the implementation of National Membership Strategy	Territory Council Regional Presidents Conference Support Team

Measure

- Policy review schedules and updates based on legislation and sector changes
- Use of evaluation surveys to assess member satisfaction and effectiveness
- Reports or dashboards tracking member engagement, retention, and feedback
- Surveys, interviews, and member forums using data to inform change

Further Resources for Conferences

Member Connect: <https://memberconnect.vinnies-cg.org.au/>

Onboarding and Offboarding

Induction Pack

Offboarding Procedure

Managing Complaints and Grievances Guide

Perspective Member Pack

Position Descriptions

Training and Resource

Assistance Guidelines – Whitegoods, cards, furniture pack, mattresses

Building Culture Awareness

Conversations with Companions

Emergence Relief Guidelines

Learning Bites

Hygiene Products Conversation

Local Community Service Guide

Recruitment Readiness Checklist

Conference Management

Creating a New Conference

Conferences Definition and Terms

History and Formation

Presidents Guide

Treasurers Guide



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