



PRESIDENT GUIDELINES

1. Purpose

This Handbook is designed to be the **authoritative guide** for Conference Presidents across the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn. Its purpose is to:

1. Support Presidents in their leadership

- Provide clarity around responsibilities
- Strengthen confidence and capability
- Offer scripts, tools and templates to make the role practical and sustainable

2. Ensure strong governance

- Align all Conferences with *The Rule (2026)*
- Reinforce Society policies and regional governance requirements
- Set consistent expectations for compliance, record-keeping and reporting

3. Protect companions, members and the Society

- Embed safe practice
- Outline clear escalation pathways
- Provide realistic scenarios and guidance

4. Strengthen Vincentian identity

- Ground Conference life in spirituality, community, friendship and service
- Provide content and tools for reflection and formation

This manual should be used to induct new Presidents, guide existing Presidents, and support Regional Council mentoring responsibilities.

2. Vincentian Leadership Foundations

2.1 Who we are

The Conference President leads within a unique spiritual tradition — one built on compassion, humility, reflection, justice and personal encounter.

The Society's work is centred on:

- Seeing Christ in the face of the poor
 - Acting with love and without judgement
 - Offering a “hand up,” not just material relief
 - Standing in solidarity with those facing injustice
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2.2 The Vincentian Leadership Model (The Vincentian Way)

A Vincentian leader:

1. Leads spiritually

Cultivates a Conference culture of reflection, faith, compassion and purpose.

2. Leads relationally

Builds trust, welcomes new members, and nurtures community.

3. Leads operationally

Ensures the Conference runs smoothly, meetings are structured, and work is coordinated.

4. Leads ethically and transparently

Upholds compliance, sets boundaries, and protects companions from harm.

5. Leads collaboratively

Partners with the Regional Council, parish, Support Centres, and community agencies.

2.3 Qualities of a Vincentian Leader

A strong President demonstrates:

Personal Qualities

- Warm, non-judgmental presence
- Humility and kindness
- Fairness and impartiality

- Reliability and integrity

Leadership Competencies

- Ability to facilitate conversations, ensure all voices are heard
- Decision-making
- Clear communication
- Ability to manage conflict calmly
- Emotional intelligence
- Consistency and follow-through

Spiritual Disposition

- A reflective nature
 - Openness to growth
 - Deep respect for the dignity of every person
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3. The Role of a Conference President

Consistent with The Rule, the President is BOTH:

- The spiritual leader
- The governance leader

This dual identity is what makes the role unique.

3.1 Core Responsibilities

A. Spiritual & Mission Leadership

The President ensures:

- Each meeting includes prayer and reflection
- Spiritual conversations are regular and inclusive
- Members grow in understanding of the Mission and values
- The Conference stays anchored in its purpose
- All voices are heard.

Tools you may use:

- Reflection guides on MemberConnect

- Gospel reflections
 - Vincentian quotes
 - Real-world case scenarios
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B. Governance & Compliance

The President must ensure:

- They are reasonably confident that potential members and volunteers are fit and proper people to join the Society (see onboarding process)
- Liaise with other Conferences as necessary for support, guidance and information sharing
- Members complete Membership Application, reference checks are completed, Code of Conduct signed and WWVP/WWCC and Police Checks are obtained
- CDS records are accurate, timely and complete
- All safeguarding concerns are immediately escalated
- Two-Vincentian home visitation/interview practice is followed
- Financial delegations and policies are adhered to
- Companion information is private, secure and never shared outside Vinnies

President's Governance Checklist:

- Does the Conference have a secure email?
 - Are minutes stored safely? A SharePoint folder is available for Vinnies account holders to upload minutes and other Society information securely.
 - Are members rostered in pairs for visits/interviews?
 - Are all new volunteers properly inducted?
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C. Operational Leadership

The President oversees:

- Meeting structure and flow
- Appointment of office bearers
- Roster systems
- Visiting coordination
- Communication between Conference and Regional Council
- Onboarding of new members

- Ensuring critical tasks do not “default” to one or two people
 - Succession planning for the retirement of office bearers
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D. Representation

Presidents represent:

- The Conference to the Region
- The Society to the parish
- Local needs to the wider organisation

This includes:

- Attending Regional Council meetings
 - Demonstrating respectful communication
 - Articulating local needs clearly and confidently
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4. Creating & Sustaining a Healthy Conference

A healthy Conference has:

- A welcoming culture
 - Clear expectations
 - Strong administrative practice
 - Commitment to spirituality and companionship
 - All voices are heard.
 - Diversity of skills and perspectives
 - A sustainable workload e.g. limiting visits undertaken based on member availability
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4.1 Recruitment

Strategies:

- Invite interested parishioners personally
- Work with Shop Managers to identify possible new members
- Present at parish masses regularly

- Encourage culturally diverse participation
- Promote roles for young people / parents / retirees
- With Conference Support assistance, work with Society marketing and communications resources for specific campaigns.

Screening & onboarding process (step-by-step):

1. Initial conversation with the President
2. Provide Member Application Form
3. Submit all checks
4. Some Conferences ask prospective members to attend meetings as observers before being welcomed into membership. This is a recommended practice, not a requirement of The Rule.
5. Complete e-Learning
6. President and Conference vote
7. Member welcomed formally
8. Training in CDS and visitation/interviews

4.2 Office Bearers

Treasurer

Responsible for:

- Credit card acquittals
- Monthly and EOY reports
- Audits and compliance checks

Treasurers to ensure:

- Members not to use personal funds without approval
- Receipts obtained for all purchases
- Correct GST coding applied
- Two-person approval for purchases in line with delegation limits

Secretary

Ensures:

- Minutes are accurate
- Agendas are prepared

- Reports are circulated
- Correspondence is logged
- Member records kept up to date

Spiritual Advisor

- Leads reflections
- Anchors Conference in Catholic identity
- Supports pastoral needs of members

Twinning Officer

- Coordinates and maintains the Conference's international partnerships through the Society's *Overseas Partnership Program (OPP)*
- Ensures regular communication with overseas Conferences
- Keeps accurate financial records of contributions
- Reports on twinning activities to the Conference as required
- Promotes awareness of the global Vincentian family
- Strengthens the Society's international network of solidarity, friendship and shared faith in action

Data Officer (Optional Position)

- Assists with CDS data entry if required
- Reviews data for accuracy
- Identifies issues, improvements and trends and provides feedback to Conference Support

5. Leading Effective Meetings

5.1 Meeting Structure

A strong meeting has:

Opening

- Welcome & Acknowledgement of Country
- Opening prayer
- Reflection (Spiritual Advisor or delegated member)

Business Items

- Approval of minutes

- Correspondence
- Treasurer's report
- Assistance provided since last meeting
- Safeguarding
- WHS
- CDS trends or issues
- Member training needs
- Rosters
- Parish liaison updates
- Social justice awareness

Closing

- Announcements
 - Next meeting details
 - Closing prayer
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5.2 Managing Discussion

President's facilitation tools:

- "Let's hear from those who haven't spoken yet."
 - "Let's park that item for general business."
 - "Let's return to our mission and ask: what best serves the companion?"
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6. Spiritual Leadership in Practice

6.1 What Spiritual Leadership Is

- Fostering openness to God's call
 - Helping members see deeper meaning in their work
 - Encouraging compassion, patience, reflection
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6.2 Practical Tools for Spiritual Leadership

- Reflection rosters

- MemberConnect resources
 - Gospel and Vincentian quotes
 - Real-world case explorations
 - Moments of silence
 - Shared prayers
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6.3 Spiritual Care of Members

Presidents watch for:

- Burnout
- Emotional strain after difficult visits
- Conflict between members
- Isolation or disengagement

Response options:

- Pastoral check-ins
 - Encouragement
 - Referral to Mission & Pastoral Care Partner
 - EAP when needed
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7. Financial Governance & Delegations

7.1 President's Role

The President is not the Treasurer but is accountable for ensuring:

- Delegations are followed
 - Expenditure is appropriate
 - Approvals are recorded
 - Finance policies are followed
 - Two-person approval exists for companion support
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7.2 Delegations

These delegation amounts are separate from, and should not be confused with, credit card transaction limits

Role	Delegation	Notes
President	\$6,000	Per transaction
Treasurer	\$6,000	Per transaction
Vice President	\$2,500	Per transaction
Secretary	\$2,500	Per transaction

7.3 Required Processes

Credit Cards

- Must have receipts
- Must be acquitted monthly
- No cash withdrawal unless authorised

Payments

- Use credit card FIRST
- No reimbursements unless unavoidable
- No direct payments to companions

Assistance Cards

- Must track distribution
 - Must reconcile monthly
 - Must complete EOY stocktake
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8. Safeguarding, WHS & Risk Management

8.1 Safeguarding Expectations

Presidents must ensure:

- All members complete safeguarding training

- All concerns are reported **within 24 hours**
 - No member conducts solo visits or interviews
 - Members recognise red flags such as:
 - Domestic violence
 - Child neglect
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Elder abuse
 - Grooming behaviours
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8.2 WHS Requirements

- Presidents ensure home visits occur safely
 - Members must withdraw if unsafe
 - Incidents must be reported
 - Driving must comply with ACT/NSW law
 - Members must adhere to the Code of Conduct at all times
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9. CDS Recording Expectations

Presidents ensure:

- Members complete notes within 48 hours
 - Assistance amounts match Finance data
 - Case notes are accurately entered for data integrity and ease of retrieval
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10. Decision-Making in the Vincentian Tradition

10.1 Consensus Process

1. Present the issue
2. Allow open discussion
3. Invite silence/reflection
4. Explore options

5. Identify common ground
 6. Agree on a decision
 7. Record decision in minutes
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11. Working with Regional Council

Presidents must:

- Attend all meetings or submit an apology
- Submit reports on time
- Declare conflicts
- Represent local needs
- Contribute to regional priorities

Regional Council provides:

- Mentorship
 - Escalation pathways
 - Strategic direction
 - Support for complex companion matters
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12. Parish, Community & Sector Partnerships

12.1 Parish Partnership

Presidents should:

- Meet Priest quarterly
 - Share anonymised data about needs
 - Invite parish participation in appeals
 - Encourage spiritual connection
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12.2 Community Partnerships

Work with:

- Schools (Mini Vinnies)

- Support Centres
 - Local services
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13. Managing Conflict & Sensitive Issues

Common issues:

- Members disagree
- Companion makes a complaint
- Boundary issues arise
- A member is non-compliant

President's script:

"Thank you for raising this. Let's address it respectfully and in line with our Mission and policies."

Escalation:

- Speak privately
 - Use Regional President
 - Use Conference Support
 - Document concerns
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14. Supporting Members & Building Team Culture

Key strategies:

- Check-in calls or messages
 - Member recognition
 - Training opportunities
 - Social gatherings
 - Peer support after difficult visits
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15. Annual Cycle for Presidents

Quarterly Activities

- Review membership compliance
- Review CDS quality
- Meet with Parish Priest
- Review financial activity

Annual Activities

- Budgeting
 - EOY reporting
 - Safeguarding audit
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16. Crisis Management & Escalation Pathways

Scenarios requiring escalation:

- Domestic violence
- Child protection concerns
- Mental health crisis
- Aggression or threats
- Fraud or financial irregularities

Contacts:

- Safeguarding Team - safeguarding@vinnies-cg.org.au
 - Conference Support – conferences@vinnies-cg.org.au
 - Regional President
 - Police or emergency services - 000
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