



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

Volunteer time is one of Australia's most precious gifts

15 May 2025

'Australia's active volunteering sector makes us the country we are and St Vincent de Paul Society is a fine example of how volunteers can enhance the community's strength.'

National President Mark Gaetani was speaking in advance of National Volunteer Week (19-25 May 2025) to thank the Society's 45,000 volunteers for their commitment to service.

'Our Members and volunteers range from primary school through teenage years to folks in their nineties, giving the Society a presence throughout the country, from the cities to regional centres and small country towns,' he said.

'Their wonderful efforts are in tune with the theme of this year's National Volunteer Week, 'Connecting Communities'. This special event highlights the important role of volunteers in our community and invites people not currently volunteering to give it a go.

The Vinnies shops, staffed mostly by volunteers, are the public face of the Society but there's much more to what we do.

'Our Members and volunteers put in thousands of hours each year visiting households in need, running food vans and other services for people wanting a hot meal and helping at times of national emergency, such as bushfires and floods.

'I really do regard our volunteers as unsung heroes, and I thank everyone for the assistance they offer to people struggling with issues like the high cost of living and housing challenges'.

Mr Gaetani added, 'As a member of the Volunteering Australia coalition, we signed on to a request to the former Social Services Minister [Amanda Rishworth] calling for ongoing resources to implement the [National Strategy for Volunteering](#).

'We look forward to new Minister Tanya Plibersek responding in a supportive manner to take the strategy forward.

'The National Strategy provides a roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of volunteer effort across Australia. It underscores the importance of recognising volunteering as more than a 'nice to have,' but as a fundamental pillar of our societal infrastructure.'

Mr Gaetani said feedback from the Society's Members and other volunteers shows providing service to their community is deeply satisfying.

'The Society believes that volunteering improves both social inclusion and personal wellbeing. In fact, we play a vital part in looking after and advocating for those in need in local communities across Australia.'

Mr Gaetani noted that the volunteering sector faces significant challenges, as highlighted by the Productivity Commission's 'Future Foundations for Giving' report.

'This said that while volunteering can help build social capital and trust within communities, there has been a noted decline in the formal volunteering rate, that is through an organisation. The rate reached a historical high in 2010 at 36 per cent and then fell to 25 per cent in 2020.

'These days there are many competing demands on people's time, and the average age of volunteers is getting older.

'The most common reason for people's first involvement with unpaid voluntary work was that they knew someone involved or were asked to volunteer. So volunteer organisations may benefit from reaching out to their communities and encouraging people to give volunteering a try.'

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