



September 2021

Role Description: Conference Member

Role title	Conference Member
Reports to	Conference President
Roles reporting to this role	Nil
Primary role objective	Conference members are those who are desirous of living their Catholic faith, or are committed to the ethos, mission, aims and objects of the Society, and who seek to live out their faith and commitment in action through the spirit of Christian charity. They do this by loving and serving their neighbour in need and participating effectively in Conference meetings, formation programs and charitable activities of the Society. (The Rule, 2012, Part 3, p.56)
Duration	Ongoing

The St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Paris 1833 by 20-year-old university student Frederic Ozanam. Frederic and his friends wished to put their faith into action by serving the poor and needy of the time. The first Australian Conference was founded shortly after, in 1854.

This compassionate outlook, enthusiasm and vision continues today in Australia. There are thousands of people who regularly share their time and energy to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged people all around Australia. Our aspiration is an Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice.

Mission

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, 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 people to take control of their own destiny.

Our Values

- **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 cause of human injustice
- **Courage:** Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future

About this role

In this voluntary role, you will be part of a Conference (group) that serves people experiencing disadvantage in your community. Conference members meet as brothers and sisters in Christ as communities of faith and love, of prayer and action (The Rule, 2012, Part 1, p.20).

The work of Conferences varies depending on local need, and the strengths and interests of its members. Conference work may include but is not limited to:

- Visiting with or interviewing people in need – our companions. Members visit or interview in pairs. Visits usually take place in the home of the person seeking assistance. Interviews typically take place on Society premises, usually in purpose build facilities in Vinnies Centres (shops).
- Providing assistance to companions in the most responsive and dignified manner and can include material help, advocacy, referrals, and/or a range of other actions.
- Regularly attending Conference meetings for prayer, mutual support, and reporting back about visits or interviews.
- Ordering and/or stocking items for the conference's food pantry.
- Participating in advocacy and other work related to matters of social justice.
- Fundraising for the Society and/or promoting of the work of the Society.

In this role you will:

- Have the opportunity to grow your faith by undertaking 'good works' serving our companions
- Enjoy the support and community life as part of a Conference
- Learn more about the local community itself, including the issues that affect our companions, and the resources available to aid in assistance
- Gain a greater understanding of poverty and disadvantage in general and how they impact people's lives.

Qualities needed to perform the role

The role suits an adult of any age who would like to engage in service with others in their local community in a faith-based organisation. You will have:

- A genuine desire to serve those in need
- An ability to listen and respond without judging
- Sensitivity to the values of people of other faiths, cultures and lifestyles
- Interest in personal and spiritual growth through service with others
- Willingness to join with others to make a difference
- Willingness to support the Society's mission and vision and the ethos of the Society.

Time commitment

- Varies according to the Conference and the availability of the member. The Conference President will speak to you about this.

Training and support

- Welcome, orientation, support and mentoring from the Conference President and other members
- Access to the Society's Learning Centre (Litmos) to complete mandatory training requirements, including the *Induction for Members* training package which covers home visits and interview guidelines
- Access to other opportunities to learn and grow within your role as a Conference member, such as attending a *Vintour* in Canberra to visit several of the Society's Special Works programs and Vinnies Centres
- Conferences are assisted by the Conference Support team as well as other employees at the Yarralumla Office, as well as their regional leadership team.

How to get involved

- Meet with a member or members of the Conference to discuss your interest
- Complete a membership application form
- Complete a Working with Vulnerable People Check (ACT) or National Criminal History Check (NSW).

The Conference President or their delegate will have a face-to-face conversation with you before you commence.