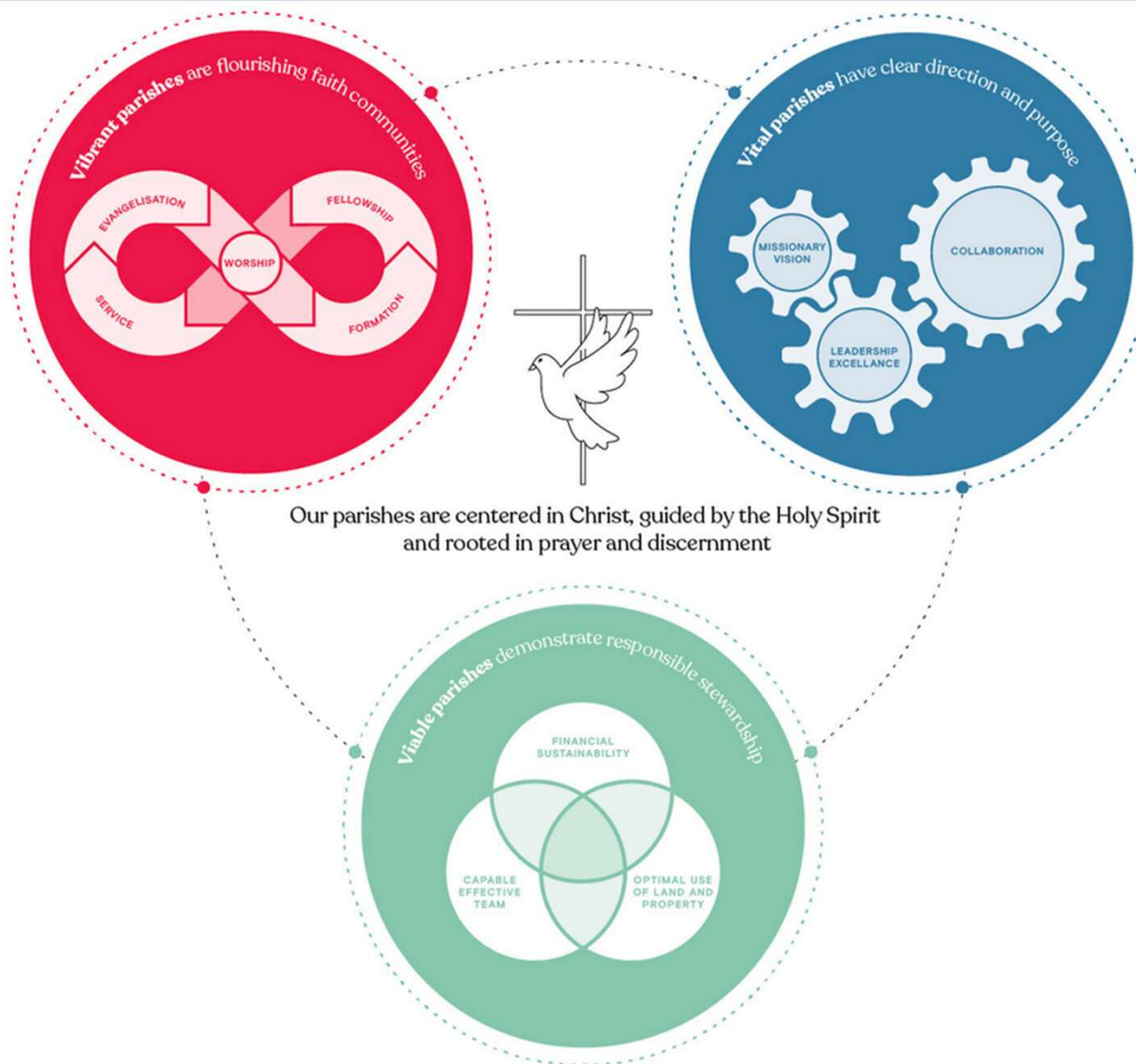


St.Mary's
Parish Williamstown
2026 AGM

2030 Strategy Recap

- Mission Led Purpose
- The Vibrant Parish
- The Vital Parish
- The Viable Parish



Partnering for Mission

- What is a Parish Partnership?
- Why Partner now?
- What are our guiding principles?
- What is our staged approach?
- What is our progress so far?
- Next Steps?



OUR PARISH AT A GLANCE

3,770

Catholics

1,523

Catholic families

1,250

Families on parish database

(Source: National Centre for Pastoral Research : 2021 ABS Census)

1842

St Mary's Primary
School founded

281

School students

200

School families

4

Weekday Masses

3

Sunday Masses

~315

Weekend Mass attendees



OUR PARISH AT A GLANCE cont.

29

Ministries & Groups

107

Volunteers

176

Registered Stewardship
contributors

88

Subscribers
online newsletter



73

Baptisms



10

First Eucharist



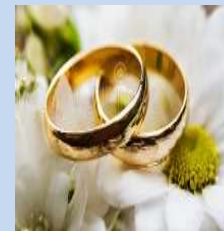
10

Confirmations



6

Participants



20

Weddings



13

Funerals

St Mary's Finance Update

Presented by Leanne Spiteri & Martin Smith

2025 resulted in a strong surplus of \$43,686 — well ahead of budget

\$256,478

Total Income 2025

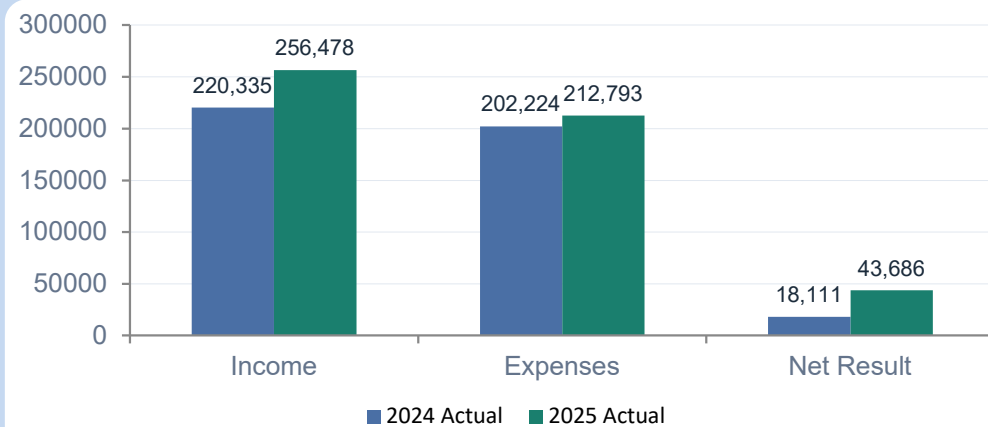
\$212,793

Total Expenses 2025

\$43,686

Net Surplus 2025

- Income surged 16% to \$256k
- Expenses held at \$213k (up 5%)
- Surplus of \$43,686 significantly exceeds 2024 result (\$18,111)



Parish balance sheet is sound

— net assets comfortably positive

CURRENT ASSETS	
Main bank account	\$52,557
Insurance Prepayment	\$27,717
Amounts Receivable (incl. GST)	\$9,190
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
PAYG W and Super obligations	\$3,609
Staff Leave Provisions	\$9,046

\$118,562

Cash and cash equivalents
(including Term Deposit)

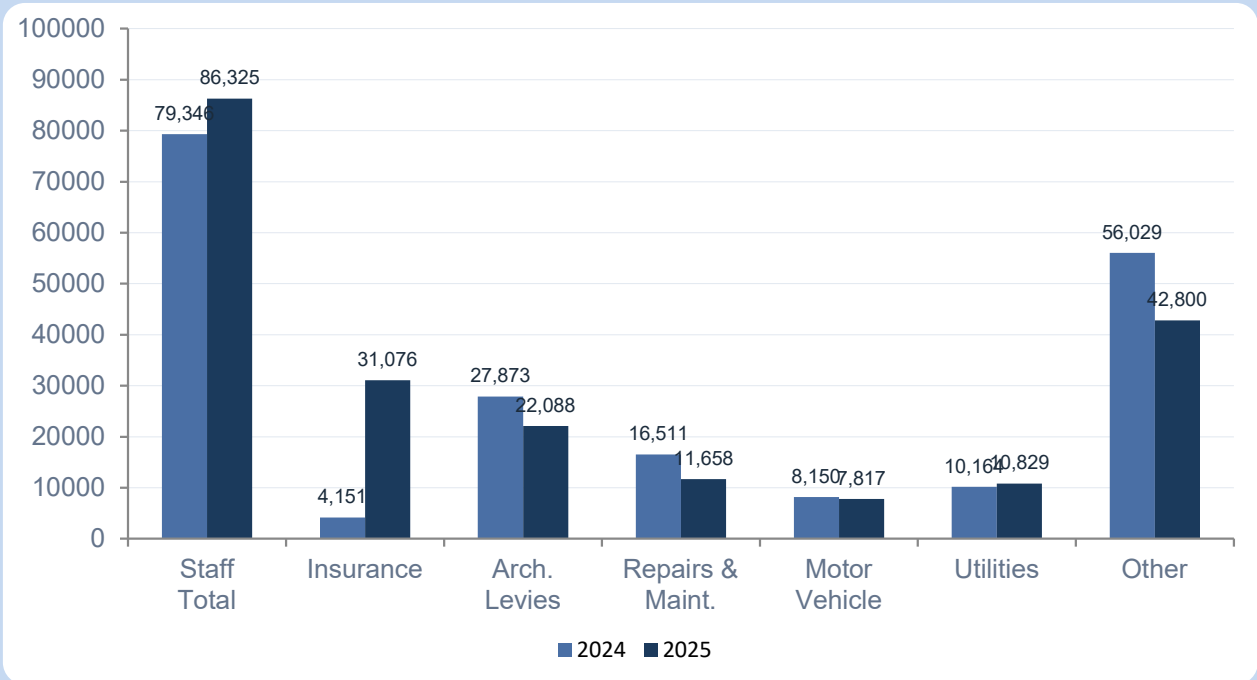
\$12,655

Current Liabilities

- Cash at bank strengthened by 2025 surplus
- Amount on term deposit \$61,376 (Maturity 1/5/2026)
- Insurance was paid in advance.

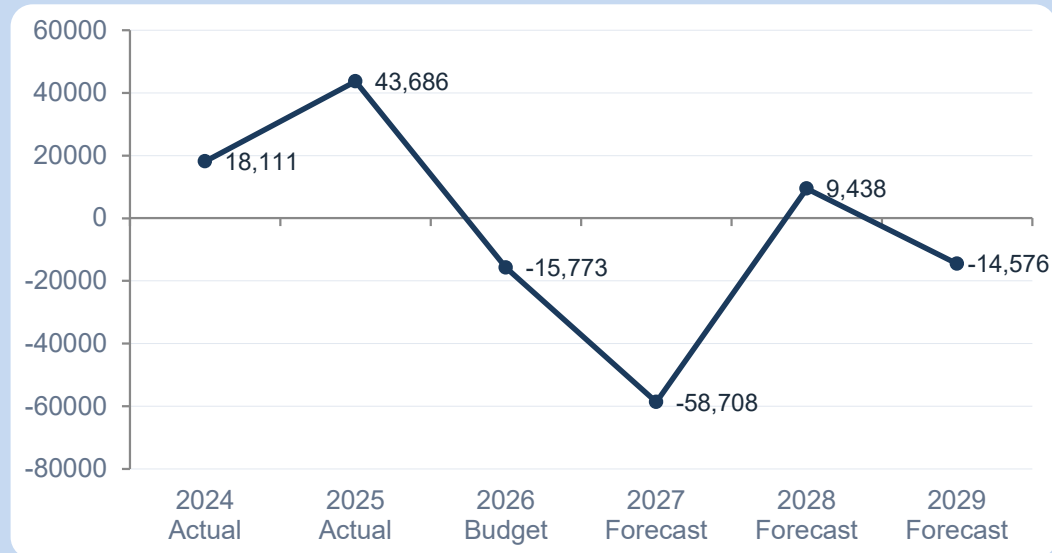
Staff costs & insurance dominate spending — total expenses \$212,793

- Staff costs are largest category at \$86k (41% of total expenses)
- Insurance costs are significant (15% of total expenses)
- Archdiocesan levies fell \$5.8k; R&M \$4.9k lower than 2024
- Insurance cost reporting in prior year is impacted by an accounting adjustment.



2026 budgets a deficit — requiring active stewardship support

- Thanksgiving income budgeted conservatively at 85% of pledges (\$154k)
- Expenses rise as R&M is budgeted at \$22k and bookkeeping formalised at \$9k
- 2027 Stewardship Campaign planned to rebuild giving base



2026 Budgeted Deficit
(\$15,773)

Thank You

The Finance Committee is grateful for the generous support of this parish community.

We meet quarterly and remain committed to transparent stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

WHERE OUR PARISH COMES TO LIFE

Frank Schobben

The purpose of ministries and groups for people in the Catholic Church is to support and encourage the involvement of lay people in the mission of the Church.

As volunteers, they also serve to strengthen the Church's presence in the world, promoting justice, solidarity, peace, and respect for the dignity of every person.

St Mary's is blessed with 29 ministries and groups that give 107 parishioners meaningful ways to participate, serve, and grow in faith. These ministries are at the heart of our community, bringing people together to support one another, deepen their spiritual lives, and live out the Gospel with compassion and purpose.

As we prepared this year's report, we wanted to highlight some of the people behind a number of these ministries.

We invited parishioners who serve in ministry to share—in their own way—what they do and the purpose of their ministry, and how their service has strengthened their faith, relationships, and sense of purpose. Whether through welcome, community, or spiritual growth, their reflections show the lasting impact of ministry in our parish.

The following pages share testimonies to the power of connection, service, and shared faith.

Each story reminds us that when we come together in Christ's name—whether to serve or to be served—we create something meaningful and lasting. We hope these reflections, as they have inspired us, help you see God's grace at work in our parish and encourage you to become more deeply involved.

Altar Server

Matthew Sy

I've been given the privilege of sharing a reflection on my altar serving journey.

From the start, my family has always attended mass. We made an effort to attend as a family every week. When we found out about the role of altar serving, we were eager to learn more about how I could get involved to serve both the parish and the Lord.

When I first applied to become an altar server, I remember feeling a little anxious, as I did not really know what to expect, but also excited, because I felt like there was something good that I could gain from the experience. The purpose of altar servers is to assist the priest and help the running of the Mass through service. From carrying the cross during the procession to setting the altar and assisting during important masses in the liturgical calendar, altar servers help the Mass run smoothly. I was fortunate to be trained by amazing people, mentored by previous altar servers, and also very important members of our parish, especially Evol Farrelly. Her knowledge, wisdom, and passion in supporting the parish was evident in the way she has been there for myself and St. Mary's ever since I met her when I started serving in Year 4, 2018.

During my first few months of serving, I slowly began to get the hang of things and grow more confident. I was fascinated by seeing what happened behind the scenes during Mass and being involved so closely in these sacred, powerful, and impactful moments. One of the things I found especially wondrous when starting out was carrying a candle during the Gospel reading and standing right beside the lectern. Being so close to such an important part of the Mass felt both exciting and awe-inspiring. Through these experiences, I was not only participating in Mass more actively but also learning the beauty of serving and helping others.

One of the greatest gifts altar serving has given me is the sense of community and the friendships I have made. I have served alongside people like Leon, Dom, and Darcy for quite some time now, and it has been amazing to build friendships centred around Christ. Altar serving also helped expand my community beyond Mass itself. There were times in the past where I was the sole server, and it's brought me joy to see the number of servers increase over the years, continuing to build that connection and network. Through these connections, I was invited to youth group, where I met even more people and learnt valuable lessons from leaders like Martin and Branka. It has shown me how service can open doors to meaningful relationships and strengthen faith.

Today, I am still serving and enjoying every bit of it. One of the things that brings me the most joy now is helping train and support newer altar servers, just as older servers once helped me. I enjoy teaching them, trying to set an example, and helping them feel welcomed and comfortable. Looking back, altar serving has helped me grow spiritually, strengthened my faith, and connected me with an incredible community. I hope to continue learning through this experience and sharing the lessons I have learnt with others.

Green Team

Anthony Verhoef

The St Mary's Green Team comprises six parishioners who want to highlight the interconnectedness between nature, society and our environment, following the principles of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the concepts of EcoSpirituality. We do this by providing information, help and events that parishioners can be involved in. We want people to **Think Global & Act Local**.

Fr Greg was keen for the parish to have an active sustainability group based on the Parish Earthcare initiative guided by Caritas Australia.

Our focus across the parish has been on promoting sustainability, encouraging environmental awareness and active participation in ecological practices.

Examples of the impact throughout the year are best shown through our following actions:

- **Ongoing parish bulletin 'Green Team' notices** – e.g. providing advice and links on reducing power bills, saving energy and money, and awareness of Pop-Up Repair Café events.
- **Provision of recycling tubs** – for parishioners to drop off small household items that cannot be placed in household yellow bins.
- **Herb garden** – established within the parish centre garden for people to pick for flavouring, food etc.



It has been rewarding making the link between the practical elements of climate change and the environment and the spiritual elements where you see the humanity and beauty of our planet.

As a committed and passionate environmentalist, at work and at home, I am very pleased to be part of this initiative.

Mary Care

Ivonne Cram

Mary Care was formed in 2023 and continues to be a vital pastoral ministry within St Mary's Parish, offering compassionate support to parishioners who are socially isolated, grieving, unwell, or otherwise vulnerable.

Guided by the spirit of St Mary MacKillop - "Never see a need without doing something about it" - our volunteers work to ensure that no parishioner feels alone in their time of need.

Since then, Mary Care has strengthened its presence, expanded its volunteer base, and deepened its outreach across the parish community. Key Achievements include:

Pastoral Support & Outreach

- 8 bereavement referrals received, with ongoing weekly support provided to 2 parishioners experiencing significant distress.
- Approximately 20 parishioners regularly received Communion at home or in care facilities, including Wintringham, local retirement villages, and hospitals.
- Regular home and hospital visits offered to parishioners unable to attend Mass.

Community Connection & Hospitality

- Seniors Mass and Luncheon continues to flourish, welcoming 33-40 attendees each month.
- Transport assistance provided to up to 10 parishioners, ensuring they can attend Mass and parish events.
- Monthly meal support coordinated including St Mary's School families, with 3 families rostered each month, including one family providing a standing monthly sandwich order.

Mary Care cont.

Ivonne Cram

Volunteer Engagement

- Growth from a founding group of 3 to 15 active volunteers.
- Ongoing coordination of volunteers supporting hospitality, pastoral visits, and transport needs.

Special Events & Liturgical Support

- Memorial Mass organised, including invitations and pastoral follow-up with recently bereaved families.
- Annual Anointing of the Sick held at Wintringham.
- Hospitality support provided for Bishop Martin Ashe's parish visit.

Leadership & Coordination

The Mary Care Team Leader continues to play a central role in coordinating pastoral needs, liaising with the Parish Priest and Pastoral Associate, and supporting volunteers in their ministry. This leadership ensures a consistent, compassionate, and well-organised approach to pastoral care across the parish.

Looking Ahead

As we explore a potential partnership with St Joseph's - Newport/Spotswood, exciting opportunities will be presented. This collaboration may allow us to share resources, expand pastoral outreach, and strengthen our collective mission of care across both parish communities.

Personal Reflection

Mary Care began with three parishioners who recognised a need for deeper, more intentional pastoral support within the parish. Today, it has grown into a thriving ministry that embodies the Gospel through kindness, compassion, and service.

As a qualified bereavement counsellor, I am grateful for the opportunity to support parishioners experiencing grief and loss. Being part of Mary Care has deepened my connection to the parish and introduced me to many generous and like-minded people who share a heart for service.

Way of the West (WOW)

Gerard Colla

Our purpose:

Way of the West works to broaden our outreach to those in need beyond the borders of our parish, with a focus on alleviating the plight of asylum seekers and refugees.

What we have done this last year:

1. The WOW Group organised the annual food collection which helps restock the ASRC (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre) and BASP (Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project).

2. Our main work this past year has been to convene a CRISP group and settle and support a newly arrived refugee family.

CRISP, which stands for Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Program, is a government initiative where community groups provide approved refugees with an alternative pathway compared to the standard Humanitarian Settlement Program run by the Australian Government. St Mary's Way of the West was part of the original pilot to trial the approach. CRISP has proven so successful that the government has now made it a permanent program.

Our latest family arrived on Cup Day 2025. They are a mother and father and two small children. The family was originally from South Sudan but had been living in a refugee camp in Ethiopia for the last ten years.

Our group has eight members drawn from our parish and from other parishes (including other denominations) in the wider area. The group underwent extensive training before being accredited to support a refugee family.

Our role is very hands on and covers everything the family needs to settle in Australia. We met them at the airport, settled them into temporary accommodation that we had arranged, along with food and clothing. We helped them register for Centrelink and Medicare, opened bank accounts for them, got them mobile phones, myki passes, and email addresses, organised health checks and followed-up medical or dental work required, enrolled the eldest child in school and the adults in migrant English lessons, and we found them permanent accommodation in a nice apartment in Noble Park, which is close to their South Sudanese community. We also talked to them about Australia and took them on journeys to, for example, learn how to use our public transport.

The support of the family was made considerably easier by the generous financial donations from members of the parish community.

Way of the West (WOW) cont.

Gerard Colla

Being part of the Way of the West is a rewarding experience:

The work of WOW can be challenging, especially when we are trying to find suitable accommodation at reasonable rents, but it is also very rewarding.

First, it is incredibly rewarding to see our family, who had so little, be safely settled and set up to build their new lives in Australia.

Second, our work is action-oriented, which is very satisfying to those who like to get things done.

Third, we get to work with a diverse range of passionate people, not all from our parish community or even who share our Catholic faith, but a strong camaraderie develops because we are all connected and working towards a shared goal.

Finally, our work is a practical and hands-on way to live our faith. It is, as Bishop Ashe pointed out, evangelisation in action.



Music Ministry

Martin and Branka Briffa

Branka and I have been making music together—pardon the pun—for more than 30 years. Over that time, music ministry has become an important part of our lives, and indeed of our marriage, in many profound ways.

Let me begin by saying that music does not improve the Mass. How could it? The Mass is already perfect through the presence of the “Word Made Flesh” in the Eucharist. So why music? In my view, music exists not because the Mass is lacking, but because we are. Music helps draw us more deeply into the mystery of the Mass. It acts as a catalyst for praise and worship, opening our hearts and minds to God and helping us focus more attentively on His Word.

Throughout the week, Branka and I spend time reading and reflecting together on the upcoming Sunday readings. From this prayerful preparation, we try to select hymns that connect with the Scriptures or the particular liturgical season. At times, this process can become rather lively, as we do not always agree on the hymn selections! We aim for a balance between contemporary music and the cherished traditional hymns that many people know and love.

Our preparation involves much more than simply choosing music. It also includes creating the PowerPoint presentation for the Mass—carefully selecting images, themes, and even background colours that reflect the liturgical season and help draw attention to something greater than ourselves. Over the years, Branka has affectionately become known as the “PowerPoint Princess.” Through this ministry, both of us have experienced significant spiritual growth.

At St Mary’s parish we have been blessed to share in ministry alongside a number of talented music groups. Each group brings its own unique style and contributes beautifully to the liturgy. Despite our differences in style, we all share the same purpose: to help draw people more deeply into the mystery of the Mass.

After each Mass, I often ask Branka whether the congregation was singing. For me, this is one of the clearest signs that the music ministry has served its purpose well. My greatest joy is hearing the voices of the congregation singing together in praise and worship.

It is always humbling when people approach me after Mass to thank me for the music. In truth, I feel that I should be the one expressing gratitude—for the privilege of participating in the liturgy through a ministry that I am deeply passionate about.

On that note, I sincerely thank the parish of Williamstown for allowing us the privilege of serving in this way.

St Vincent de Paul

Tim Lonergan



St Vincent de Paul Society members are passionate about helping people in need. Affectionately referred to as 'Vinnies', we work to combat social injustice. Many of our clients are either marginalised or disadvantaged.

There are seven of us, working as a group (known as the Williamstown conference) within the local community, providing support to individuals and families by visiting them in their homes, or in the community. This practice is known as **home visitation** and is a core work of the Society.

In my role as President of the Williamstown conference, we meet monthly using the facilities of St Mary's parish. All referrals come from the head office call-centre located in Box Hill. On average we receive approximately 20 calls for assistance per month, which equates to 2-3 visitations per week.

Separate to our conference, St Vincent de Paul has two retail shops in the Newport/Williamstown area, and a soup van visits the local area weekly. We are grateful to Fr. Greg and St Mary's Parish for their ongoing support, and particularly to the annual Winter Appeal which this past year raised a generous \$1,700.00

Just as our clients face diverse challenges, our conference too faces the challenges of lack of volunteers to assist our ageing members. There is something to suit all commitment levels, which vary depending on study, work and family commitments.

That said, I derive a lot of satisfaction giving back to the community, helping others and the sense of community and friendship it provides.

Gardening Maintenance

John O'Keefe

Just over 40 years ago when my wife Mary and I decided to give up dairy farming in the district of Koroit, we made Williamstown our new home. Our children were enrolled in St Mary's primary school, so we were inspired to become involved in the parish community. I had always been keen on gardening, so when Fr Kevin Smith invited me to join in the working bees, I gladly accepted.

I am part of a loyal team of a dozen parishioners who regularly participate in scheduled weekend working bees that last two to three hours. Our tasks include gardening, rubbish clean-up of church gardens and grounds to keep them attractive, safe, and well maintained. For many years I have been the coordinator of working bees, which involves telephoning fellow volunteers to allocate tasks and ensure that work is completed. This has deepened my ties and fostered a local support network that I can rely on.

The working bees also provide an opportunity to catch-up with fellow parishioners over a shared cup of tea—it is good to talk and listen to different perspectives on what matters to us.



There is a therapeutic benefit to working outdoors too, as well as learning and collaborating with like-minded parishioners in our faith community. What we especially enjoy is the fulfilment and satisfaction of stepping back and seeing what the team has achieved in just a few hours.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who come together to support Fr Greg and our parish community.



Question Time

We now welcome any questions or feedback.