



# ANNUAL REPORT

## ST VERONICA WELFARE COMMITTEE 2023

St Veronica Welfare Committee founded by Mr and Mrs Colin Bennett 1956

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President/Trustee: Mrs Margaret Kerwin • Vice President: Mrs Jan Drake • Treasurer: Mrs Jeanette Day • Hon. Accountant Mrs Elizabeth Cole

Secretary Mr Michael Kerwin • Trustee: Mr John Kennett • Hon. Solicitor: Mr Paul Kerwin • ABN 74 044 171 838

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

“

*Thanks to your support, I am happy to advise that for the St Veronica Committee, 2023 was once more a successful year.*

”

As I review the year I am inspired by the kindness and goodwill of our donors and the outstanding generosity of spirit of volunteers who, week in and week out, cheerfully donate time and energy to ensure St Veronica's functions. Despite many and varied family commitments, health issues, financial and other demands on their attention, the St Veronica's community continues to help those in need. Dearest people, I hope you are aware of the difference you make to the lives of poor overseas students and communities who benefit from your goodwill and how much you are appreciated. Thanks to your support, I am happy to advise that for the St Veronica Committee, 2023 was once more a successful year. You all are wonderful Australians!

However, for many, both overseas and in Australia, the year was marred by suffering and disasters, natural and manmade, with the scale of some overseas catastrophes requiring an international response. In some cases, the Committee used shop profits and uncommitted financial donations to contribute. Thus, donations and shop funds have contributed to appeals for victims of the Türkiye earthquake, for Sri Lankans struggling with crippling inflation and unemployment due to political and financial crises, for refugees and victims of ethnic and religious rioting in north-east India and, in December, essential reconstruction resulting from cyclone damage in Nellore, India.

During the year, the Committee's educational sponsorship program for poor students continued with the \$100 annual subscription contributing towards the cost of texts, school fees, uniforms, and other necessities. Whilst the funds did not cover the full cost, overseas coordinators assure us that it is a significant help and can determine whether a child or youth continues in education. Similarly, the \$500 the Committee or sponsor contributes towards a university, college or vocational course can assist a student access essential post-school education.

Dear Supporters, members of the Committee are aware that rising costs are causing cost of living pressures and hardship for many Australians, and we appreciate your generosity in loyalty continuing your sponsorship support. However, it has been brought to our attention that inflationary pressures overseas are causing even greater suffering with nations such as Ethiopia experiencing an average annual inflation rate over the last 10 years of 15.3%. (source: www.focus-economics.com)

As the result of the above, at its November meeting, a majority of Committee members agreed to increase the annual sponsorship subscription to \$150 from July - a significant increase! **Dear Sponsors, if this increase is problematic, and it may be an issue for many of us coping with tight budgets or sponsoring several students, then please continue to pay the past subscription rate and the Committee will use another revenue source to complement your \$100 subscription. The Committee does not want to lose your support and thanks you for your loyalty and understanding.**

With my very best wishes for 2024.

Margaret Kerwin

Hon. President

## A HELPING HAND MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Towards the end of 2023, the Sisters of St Ann at Nava Jeevan Illam in India conducted a medical - dental camp for children experiencing poor health post Covid. At the time of compiling this report, 183 school children have received medical and dental check-ups. The Sisters plan to continue the program in 2024 ensuring as many children as possible have the opportunity to attend.



Children attending a medical and dental camp run by the Sisters of St Ann, Nava Jeevan Illam, India.  
(Camp financed by St Veronica supporters)

Father Augustine, the Bethany Fathers Mission Superior in Ethiopia, has extended his mission to reach the extremely poor Gumuz people in Galiyarogda, an area where malnutrition, child marriage, infant mortality and polygamy are common. As food prices rose, exacerbated by the recent civil war, this poverty-stricken group became even poorer. To avoid future starvation, the Bethany Fathers introduced and supported the construction of rainwater tanks to provide access to potable water for community personal needs plus water for agriculture.



Left: Father Augustine supervising the construction of four Rain water harvesting tanks for the poor Gumuz people at Galiyarogda to ensure future water security.



Right: Financially disadvantaged and under-privileged Gumuz people at Galiyarogda, Ethiopia, celebrate a good harvest of maize and chickpeas (seeds and fertilizer financed by St Veronica supporters)



# 2023 OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

As mentioned in the Committee's August Newsletter, at the Annual General Meeting in April 2023, Mrs Fay Roberts resigned from her position as a shop coordinator. At 91, Fay decided that, after decades in the role, it was time to resign. Fay, in the red dress, front row second from left below, maintains a keen interest in the shop and continues to collect quality donations for sale and to provide advice to current shop coordinators.



*Some of the many Committee supporters who attended the 2023 Annual General Meeting in April 2023.  
(Back row Left to Right: Sharyn, Wendy, Bryan, John, Mike.  
Front Row Left to Right: Lee, Fay, Sue, Gai, Margaret)*

There are many ways in which you can volunteer and make a difference. Frank Drake (below left, together with friend Bob) has retired from his work as an independent businessman / electrician. During this time Frank kindly donated his time and skills to St Veronica's completing all needed electrical work, saving the Committee very considerable expense. Recently volunteers were delighted to see that Frank has managed to convert the long grass and out-of-control weeds in our back yard into a presentable lawn.



*Frank and Bob at work improving our unruly backyard!*



*Year 10 students at Mother Theresa School, Vadakattuppatty, India, ready for their final examinations. Students did well in their practice exams and anticipate success in their finals.  
Father Arockiasamy and Sister Theresa wish them well*

During Covid, many overseas youths left school, working to support their struggling families. Thilina Anuhas from Siri Nidhan, New Beginnings, was one such student. Withdrawing from school due to financial concerns, Anuhas worked with his father to earn a living wage. Subsequently, with the encouragement of his sponsor, Mrs Ann Henry, and Sister Placida, sponsorship coordinator, Anuhas was persuaded to continue his education. Using shop profits, a milking cow was purchased to offset the loss of family income and Anuhas is now enrolled in a vocational course in automobiles. His mother advised of her relief when Anuhas confided: 'when I felt I was accepted as I am and (someone) truly took interest in me and my future, I was motivated to begin again. I am very grateful to you for making all this happen.'



*Thilina Anuhas with the milking cow funded by the Committee. The additional income from the milk allowed Anuhas to return to college.*



*Left: Thilina Anuhas (left) at his Vocational Training Automobile Course.  
Right: Ongoing Siri Nidhan agricultural projects supported by St Veronica's provide food and income for resettled slum dwellers in Sri Lanka.*



*Some of the students at Bethel Orphanage where the Committee sponsors 32 children*



# APPEALS

The Committee conducted quarterly appeals in 2023 and responded to several additional needs including donations for the victims of the **Türkiye earthquake**; to meet the cost of food, education, clothing and medical expenses for the 40 plus abandoned children under the care of the **Bethany Karunalayu, Hyderabad, Orphanage**; to provide for medical and emergency relief for **struggling poor in Sri Lanka**; to support the **Manipur refugees fleeing religious and ethnic violence in India**; and to secure the grounds of Bethel Orphanage after damage caused by **severe tropical cyclone Michaung** threatened the integrity of orphanage grounds and the children's and Sisters' safety.

## January / March Appeal

This appeal sought funds to assist the **Mumbai Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco** to promote education for approximately 400 Varli tribal children in 10 villages in the Indian Union of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Western India. Many Varli are disadvantaged with lives characterised by unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, school dropouts, early marriage, suicide and alcoholism. The sisters' goal is to educate the children through exposure to a regular academic curriculum combined with programs on social awareness for both students and parents.

## April / June Appeal

Funds were raised to support the work of the **Bethany Fathers** assisting the most side-lined and under-privileged group in **Ethiopia**, the **Gumuz tribe in Galiyarogda**. The Gumuz have neither access to electricity nor a ready supply of water. The appeal raised funds for the construction of rainwater tanks and dry toilets for 46 families in the Gumuz settlement of Thapo. Access to a hygienic toilet is a benefit to local women and girls who suffer from lack of privacy.

## July / September Appeal

Appeal for the **Madonna Centre for Children experiencing mental challenges** financed the expense of tiling the school grounds to enable students to enjoy the benefits of physical exercise and play year-round. Persistent mud and grass together with the spread of giant African snails had made the grounds a health hazard, unsuitable for the growing number of students attending the centre.

## October / December Appeal

Due to their poor financial situation, many families around **Nava Jeevan Illam** cannot afford regular health checks or medical treatment. Seeing the general poor health of the children post-Covid, Sister Fatima Selvi, a nurse and the Sister in Charge, requested funds to organise general health and dental check-ups and to provide necessary medical treatment and on-going dental care (toothbrush and paste) for 400 children.



About 400 Varli Children attending school: Sister Rita D'Souza advises "joyful, holistic learning has reduced the incidence of early marriage, suicide, school dropout and child labour".



Left: Toilet construction at Galiyarogda under the guidance of Father Bony (Gumuz people provide the labour, St Veronica contributes to cost of materials)  
Right: Toilet construction for and with the Gumuz people

The students staying at Bethel Orphanage in the Nellore Diocese are from rural areas lacking proper transport, medical facilities and schools. Families are poor and some are tribal. The children stay at the hostel to obtain a good education.

The catastrophic damage to the orphanage grounds caused by Cyclone Michaung required urgent reconstruction. In the past government officials have insisted on prioritising the children's security and St Veronica's has helped provide funds for closed circuit cameras, fire extinguishers and iron mesh doors to comply with government requests.



Bethel Orphanage wall destroyed during catastrophic Cyclone Michaung (above)



Reconstruction of the Bethel Orphanage wall commenced swiftly with funds donated by Committee donors and shop profits.



Students from St Joseph's Bethany Navajeevan Vidyalayal enjoy their studies



Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil addresses locals and Manipur refugees (Thanks to the generosity of a Committee donor, in June, St Veronica's forwarded funds to the Salesian Sisters in Shillong to provide help and education for the refugee children from Manipur's ethnic violence where 50,000 people were displaced)



In May the Committee received a delightful but unexpected visit from the Kopinski Family (Veronica and her parents John and Sabina). To our surprise, Veronica (the young lady who designs our unique Christmas cards each year) presented the Committee with a very welcome cheque. The funds were raised at a dance at St Francis Church Hall, West End, which she had organised as an alternative to nightclubbing for the young people in her age group. The dance was very successful, and Veronica plans future similar events.

It was a pleasure to inform both Veronica and the young people who attended the dance that their funds had been donated to Father Augustine's work in Ethiopia where drought and civil war has caused malnourishment, with many children requiring medical assistance and basic nutrition.



Some of the young people enjoying the Social Dance at St Francis, West End. The event raised funds to support malnourished children in Ethiopia.



Left: Despite the lack of vehicular access, much needed food arrives in Galyarogda  
Right: Malnourished infants receive food plus Medical care Ethiopia, 2023



Fertilizer distribution, Galyarogda, Ethiopia



Each day 100 families benefit from potable water from the bore well constructed at Goro, Ethiopia. Funds from St Veronica's supported this program

# GOOD NEWS!

In May, Father Zacharias, the Director of Jeevan Jyothy Special School, Mardala, advised his centre has secured many job opportunities with the installation of the plate-making machine financed by the Committee. Many of the jobs were offered to students who had turned 18 enabling them to secure an income. Father states **'It boosted the moral (self-confidence, self-responsibility and self-esteem) of the students and their parents. We thank everyone who supported us'**



Left: Students attending Jeevan Jyothy Special School, India, continue to produce, package and sell environmentally friendly plates (plate-making machine funded by the Committee)  
Right: 'LET OUR LIGHT SHINE'

Bethan Jeevan Jyothy School motto. A very happy student has gained skills to help her earn her own income!



Students at Infant Jesus Orphanage, Mulagumoodu, celebrate Christmas.  
(Sister Selvi, Sister in Charge, on far right)  
There are 32 sponsored students at Infant Jesus Orphanage

Early in 2023 the Committee was delighted to forward a supporter's donation to the Marist Sisters at Balay Banaag Centre, Davao City, in the Philippines, to assist in their work protecting vulnerable girls from exposure to prostitution and sexual abuse.

Currently there are 15 at risk children under the care of Sister Lilibeth, sm. The children, whose ages range from 7 – 15, are enrolled in public schools. Sister's goal is to ensure each child can live a fulfilling, independent future life by growing up in a safe environment.

Sister Lilibeth planned to utilise the funds to provide medical help where needed and to complete an essential building renovation. She also hoped to purchase new uniforms, bags and shoes for the swiftly growing students and to provide a recreational activity once each quarter.



Students at Balay Banang Centre, Philippines, with Sister Lilibeth S.M.



There is no electricity access in Galyarogda and no likelihood of it being installed soon. The St Veronica Christmas appeal supported the purchase of solar lamps for students and families – the lamps enabled students to study at night and for monitoring livestock and agricultural projects after dark

In September, the Committee was pleased to receive a visit from Sister Placida, from Siri Nidhan, Sri Lanka. In addition to resettling slum dwellers, establishing income-earning projects, coordinating students' educational sponsorships, Sister provides counselling, vocational training, and equipment to assist those moving from the slums. Currently there are 36 student sponsorships at Siri Nidhan.



Sister Placida's visit to St Veronica's in September (front row from left: Fay, Sister, Margaret. Back row from left: Elizabeth, Jan, Mike, Kay)



Funds from St Veronica's provided for the distribution of donkeys for transport of food, water, agricultural and educational supplies in remote areas of Ethiopia



In July, Sister Geralda, the newly appointed sponsorship coordinator at Queen of Apostles Society, St Joseph's Convent, Charummood, conducted an awareness seminar for sponsored students and their parents. Sister reports: **'It was successful. All were present. From next week onwards I will visit the children's house, after that I will report on the current situation and educational progress of the child.'**



*Awareness seminar for children and parents, Charummood.*

For many years the Committee has supported the St Joseph's Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Blind in Dindigul Diocese. This centre under the guidance of the director, Mr Matchakalai who is also blind, provides vocational training and educational support for blind children and adults.



*Mr Matchakalai with a blind family, one of many who benefit from the help provided by the rehabilitation programs offered by St Joseph's*



*Sister Fatima passes on toothbrushes to participants at the medical and dental camp. The program is planned to continue with more schools to benefit in 2024.*



*Vocational Training continues at Troncatti Home (2022 Appeal)*



*Egg preparation to provide mandatory meal for Goro students, Ethiopia  
St Veronica 2023 Christmas Appeal*



*Sacred Heart Sisters in Ethiopia empower disadvantaged local women*

On November 22, the Committee received a letter from Fr Sajan Antony, the past Committee sponsorship coordinator at St Joseph's Parish, Kandamthitta, Neyyattinkara Diocese, reflecting the thoughts expressed by many Committee centre directors. A portion of Father's letter is shown below:

***My heart is filled with gratitude for the tremendous impact your organization has had on the lives of our community's underprivileged children. Your unwavering commitment to providing financial assistance has not only alleviated the burdens they face but has also given them a chance for a brighter future.***

***I want to express my deepest appreciation for the compassion and generosity displayed by the St. Veronica Welfare Society. Your support has allowed these children to pursue education, dream big, and break the cycle of poverty. Your dedication to making a difference in their lives is truly commendable.***

***May the spirit of gratitude and kindness that you embody continue to inspire us all. Wishing you and the St. Veronica Welfare Society a Thanksgiving filled with joy, knowing that your efforts have made a lasting and positive impact on the lives of our community's precious children.***

***Hope that you will be continuing to assist the students of St. Joseph's Church Kandamthitta. Praying for you and your team for the great effort.***

***With heartfelt thanks,  
Fr.Sajan Antony***



*Adults attending the Blind Centre where they learn income-earning skills which 'kindles a ray of home in the lives of the blind'*

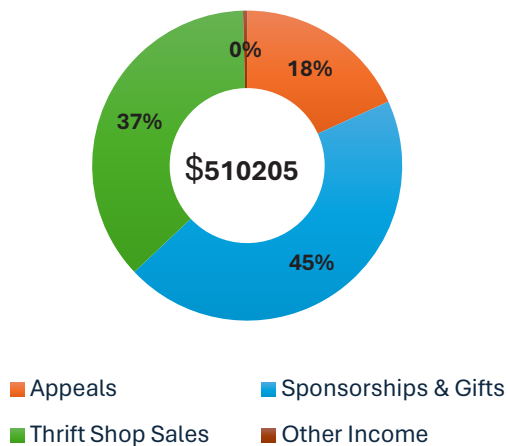


# TREASURER'S REPORT

## OUR FINANCES

The 2023 year has been a positive year for the Committee recording a surplus of \$8910 with the Thrift Shop operational for the whole year. The initial start to the year was slow, with an increase in Thrift Shop sales occurring as the year progressed. These results have enabled us to continue our objective and where possible provide extra support for centres in critical need of extra funding. The Committee is also grateful for the continued support of our generous Donors.

### FUNDS RECEIVED



The 2023 Donor income amounted to \$321,289, a decline of 13% from the previous year.

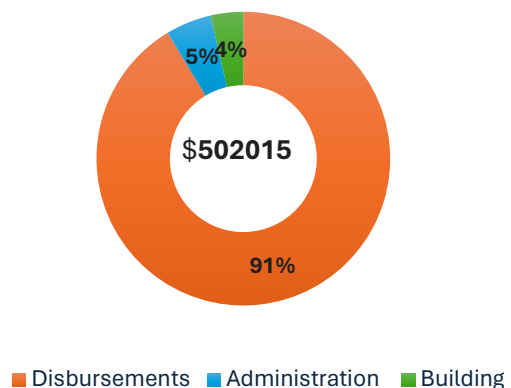
Sponsorship funds for the students remained similar to 2022, however, the support for overseas and special appeals has significantly reduced.

The Thrift Shop has celebrated a much-improved presence in 2023 year with a full year's trade compared to 11 weeks closure in the 2022 year. The shop has also had a makeover of the layout resulting in a more welcoming environment. The sales for the year amounted to \$186,715 an increase of 18% on 2022 sales. The average weekly takings have remained similar to prior years.

Expenditure (excluding disbursements) for the 2023 year has remained in line with the prior year. The committee was also eligible for various rebates from the government.

This year's disbursements amounted to \$458,787 a reduction of 5.7% on the previous year. (2022 \$486,378). The reduction in disbursements has not affected the contributions to Childrens' educational cost. Of the total disbursements for the year, contributions from the Thrift Shop sales were approximately \$143,900. This enabled the committee to further the education of select students at university level. We remain committed to sending the maximum amount of funding possible to our centres and central to this process it is vital that the operational costs of the Committee be kept to a minimum along with maximizing income from the Thrift Shop.

### FUNDS UTILISED



The committee show a healthy net asset position of \$88,932 at the close of the 2023 year which will enable us to meet our ongoing objectives.

*Elizabeth Cole*

*Accountant (Hon)*

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## ST VERONICA WELFARE COMMITTEE

### STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Sponsorships, Gifts & Appeals	321289	368700
Thrift Shop Sales	186715	157870
Other Income	2201	720
	<u>510205</u>	<u>527290</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Overseas Centre Disbursements	458787	486378
Depreciation	1349	1557
Administration expenses	41879	38542
	<u>502015</u>	<u>526477</u>
Net Profit	8190	813
Other Comprehensive Income	0	0
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>	<u>8190</u>	<u>813</u>

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022 **EQUITY**

Accumulated Funds	190970	182780
Asset Revaluation Reserve	697962	697962
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<u>888932</u>	<u>880742</u>

#### **CURRENT ASSETS**

Cash	136870	123140
Sundry Debtors	693	528
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>137563</u>	<u>123668</u>

#### **NON CURRENT ASSETS**

Property, Plant & Equipment	758808	759558
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<u>758808</u>	<u>759558</u>

#### **TOTAL ASSETS**

<u>896371</u>	<u>883226</u>
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#### **CURRENT LIABILITIES**

Sundry Creditors	7439	2484
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<u>7439</u>	<u>2484</u>

#### **NET ASSETS**

<u>888932</u>	<u>880742</u>
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# SPONSOR A STUDENT

## NIJO PV



NIJO PV is a student in the Neyyattinkara Parish of St Paul's at Maranalloor, Kerala, India.

He is studying in 7th Grade and is 12 years of age. He comes from a very poor family. He has one sister, Neethu PV. His father, Prakash SP, is the sole income earner for the family and earns his income by driving others around. He has difficulty finding work due to his ill health with heart problems.

Nijo is very interested in studying and his hobbies are drawing and reading. He would like to continue his education and become an engineer.

## SOBIKA



SOBIKA is a student at St Francis Xavier's Primary School, Alenchy, Kerala, India.

She is studying in 2nd Grade. Sobika is a Hindu. She has one elder sister.

Sobika's father, an alcoholic, refuses to take care of the family's basic needs. As a result, Sobika's mother finds it very difficult to bring up her children. She would very much benefit from sponsorship assistance.

## WASTE NOT - OUR MOTTO

As supporters are aware Committee Thrift Shop profits cover all St Veronica's administrative expenses and provide financial assistance for Committee centres, tertiary students and other projects.

The shop has interesting and quality donated stock suitable for many purposes. Note: Suitable excess stock is sent to other charities in need including the **People's Mission, Emmanuel City Mission, Care Kits for Kids and Baby Give Back**. (Whilst some soiled and / or damaged donations may be washed, ironed and repaired, unsuitable donations are discarded, frequently involving trips to a Council resource recovery centre. Both latter solutions require car trips by volunteers.)

For information on the suitability of donations to the Committee, please refer to the Committee's website

[www.stveronica.org.au](http://www.stveronica.org.au)



Above and Below: Some small examples of the surprising array of items on sale.  
Please consider visiting – you may find something you have always wanted!

## Would you like to sponsor a child/donate to our work?

I would like to donate \$  (PLEASE TICK RELEVANT BOX) Child Sponsorship - \$150 per year ☐ OR Support of Special Appeals ☐  
(New sponsorships only)

METHOD OF PAYMENT: MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ CHEQUE ☐ (PLEASE TICK ONE)

NAME / NAME ON CARD:

SIGNATURE:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

CARD NUMBER:

EXPIRY DATE:  /

Please send your gift to: St Veronica Welfare Committee, PO Box 5098, West End Q 4101 | PHONE: 07 3844 7423 | ABN: 74 044 171 838

EMAIL: [admin@stveronica.org.au](mailto:admin@stveronica.org.au) | WEB: [www.stveronica.org.au](http://www.stveronica.org.au)