

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

## 1 IS THERE ANY COST INVOLVED IN THE VSM?

The program is free to join and open to all secondary students across NSW. Some initiatives may involve collecting or purchasing goods (e.g. snack packs or toiletry kits), but participation should never be limited by financial circumstances.

We acknowledge that access to materials or funds can vary. If the quantity or cost of an initiative poses a barrier, we encourage facilitators or students to contact their Vinnies School Engagement Officer or the VSM team. Flexible options, such as leading a donation drive or adapting the activity are always available to ensure everyone can participate meaningfully.

## 2 DO STUDENTS HAVE TO START IN YEAR 7?

While it's recommended that students begin in Year 7 and progress through the levels over time, students can start the program in any year from 7 to 12. The VSM offers flexible and accelerated pathways for students joining later.

## 3 WHAT IF A STUDENT CAN'T COMPLETE A STAGE?

We understand that students' circumstances can change. The VSM team and facilitator will work with the student to provide support, this might mean extending timelines, providing alternatives, or resuming participation when the time is right.

## 4 CAN STUDENTS PARTICIPATE INDIVIDUALLY?

Yes! While many students participate through schools, others engage through parishes, community groups, or independently. As long as there is an appropriate adult supervisor (e.g. youth worker, parent, or local leader), students are welcome to join.

## 5 CAN STUDENTS DO OTHER SERVICE PROGRAMS AT THE SAME TIME?

Absolutely. The VSM complements programs like the Duke of Edinburgh Award and other service or leadership recognitions. Many students already contribute to Vinnies initiatives as part of other programs and we're proud to support and celebrate that. There's no conflict in being recognised for multiple achievements.

## 6 WHAT DOES THE FACILITATOR NEED TO DO?

Facilitators are not expected to teach, assess, or supervise in class activities. Their main role is to support student participation and verify that a student has been involved meaningfully in their initiatives. The VSM team provides all required tools and is available for ongoing support.



## 7 HOW ARE MEDALLIONS AWARDED?

Once a student has submitted their initiative evidence and it has been verified by their facilitator, the VSM team will issue the appropriate certificate or medallion. Recognition can be arranged through a school or group ceremony or sent directly to the student if needed.

## 8 CAN OUR SCHOOL ADAPT THE PROGRAM TO SUIT OUR CONTEXT?

Definitely. The VSM is designed to be flexible and responsive to different environments. Schools can embed it through existing initiatives, well-being programs, relevant classes, or offer it as an extracurricular opportunity. If you're planning a unique delivery approach, we encourage you to check in with the VSM team or Vinnies School Engagement Officer, we're happy to help tailor it to your context and ensure alignment with the recognition framework.

## 9 WHAT KINDS OF EVIDENCE DO STUDENTS NEED TO SUBMIT?

Students can choose how they present their evidence. This might be a short written summary, photo, video, podcast, or creative reflection. The format is flexible and designed to suit different learning styles and preferences.

Alongside the evidence, students complete a short reflection about what they learned or what shifted their thinking. Facilitators simply verify that the student participated meaningfully, no formal assessment is required.

## 10 CAN STUDENTS COMPLETE ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS OR ON WEEKENDS?

Yes! Many initiatives take place during lunch breaks, weekends, or school holidays. Students are encouraged to engage in ways that suit their schedule and interests, including activities they may already be involved in.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Maggie Lipu  
Service Medallion Coordinator  
**Email:** [vsm@vinnies.org.au](mailto:vsm@vinnies.org.au)