Vinnies good works | Vinnies Service Medallion

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Getting Started

1 IS THERE A COST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VSM?

No. The Vinnies Service Medallion (VSM) is free for schools and students to participate in.

2 DO SCHOOLS NEED TO REGISTER EACH YEAR?

Yes. Schools are asked to register each year so we can keep school and supervisor details up to date and provide the latest resources and support.

3 DO STUDENTS NEED TO REGISTER EACH YEAR?

No. Students only need to register once. Their participation and progression can continue across multiple years.

4 WHEN SHOULD STUDENTS REGISTER, AND CAN THEY JOIN PARTWAY THROUGH THE YEAR?

Students should ideally register before participating in VSM activities; however, students can join the program at any time during the year.

5 DO STUDENTS OR SCHOOLS NEED TO BE CATHOLIC TO PARTICIPATE?

No. The VSM is open to all young people regardless of faith background or school setting.

6 WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CORE INITIATIVE AND ONGOING ACTIVITY?

Core Initiatives are major Vinnies appeals or campaigns, such as the Winter Appeal, Christmas Appeal, Disaster Appeal or School Sleepout. Students get an opportunity to engage with a key social justice issue and take action through fundraising, donations or awareness-raising.

Ongoing Activities are practical service activities that support Vinnies that can be completed at different times throughout the year, such as preparing Snack Packs, running a Collection Drive, Return & Earn etc. “Ongoing” refers to these activities being available throughout the year rather than being tied to one particular annual appeal; students are not expected to complete the same activity continuously.

Participating In The VSM

7 WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES CAN COUNT TOWARDS THE VSM?

Students can participate in a variety of volunteering and social justice activities. Examples include Vinnies appeals, fundraising initiatives, food drives, awareness campaigns and volunteering.

8 CAN STUDENTS RECEIVE RECOGNITION FOR ACTIVITIES THEY ARE ALREADY DOING?

Yes. Many students are already involved in activities that align with the VSM. For example, preparing sandwiches for a Vinnies Van may contribute towards a Bronze Medallion, while volunteering on the Van itself is recognised through the Silver Volunteer Pathway. If you're unsure whether an activity aligns with the VSM, please contact your local school engagement officer or visit here.

9 DO STUDENTS NEED TO COMPLETE THE AWARD LEVELS IN ORDER?

Yes. Students should complete each award level before progressing to the next level.

10 CAN STUDENTS PARTICIPATE INDIVIDUALLY?

Yes. Students can choose to participate independently or through a community group.

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Participating In The VSM

11 HOW DO STUDENTS PROGRESS THROUGH THE VSM?

Students progress by participating in eligible activities, reflecting on their experiences by submitting evidence and meeting the requirements for each award level.

12 CAN PARTICIPANTS TAKE PART IN OTHER SERVICE PROGRAMS AT THE SAME TIME?

Yes. The VSM can complement other service, leadership and recognition programs such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Pope Francis Award and Mary MacKillop Award.

13 CAN ACTIVITIES BE COMPLETED OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS?

Yes. Activities can be completed inside or outside school hours, provided they align with the VSM guidelines.

14 IS THERE A MINIMUM TIMEFRAME FOR COMPLETING AN AWARD LEVEL?

Award levels are ideally completed over a year to encourage sustained participation. Students can return and continue the program in future years if needed.

15 CAN STUDENTS COMPLETE ACTIVITIES AS A GROUP?

Yes. Many VSM activities are designed to be completed collaboratively with other students or as part of a school initiative.

16 IS THERE A MINIMUM AMOUNT STUDENTS NEED TO COLLECT, MAKE OR FUNDRAISE?

No. The focus is on participation, effort and impact rather than achieving a specific target.

17 CAN STUDENTS PROPOSE OR ADAPT AN ACTIVITY THAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM KIT?

Yes. Schools and students are encouraged to contact the VSM Team to discuss new ideas and potential alignment with the program.

Awards & Recognition

18 HOW ARE STUDENTS NOMINATED AND CONFIRMED FOR AN AWARD?

Schools submit their participant lists during an award round which is done on a termly basis. The VSM Team then reviews registrations, evidence submissions and eligibility before confirming awards.

19 WHEN ARE AWARDS DISTRIBUTED?

Awards are distributed throughout the year during designated award rounds. Key dates are shared with participating schools each term.

20 WHAT EVIDENCE IS REQUIRED?

Evidence may include a reflection, photographs, newsletters, videos, audio recordings or other approved examples demonstrating participation and learning.

21 WHAT HAPPENS IF A STUDENT DOES NOT COMPLETE ALL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN AWARD?

Students can continue participating and work towards completing the outstanding requirements at a later date.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Awards & Recognition

22 CAN YEAR 12 STUDENTS BE RECOGNISED BEFORE GRADUATION?

Yes. Schools are encouraged to identify graduating students early so recognition can be arranged before graduation ceremonies where possible.

23 DOES EVERY STUDENT WHO PARTICIPATES IN A VINNIES ACTIVITY NEED TO REGISTER AND SUBMIT EVIDENCE?

No. Students participating in a one-off activity, such as the Winter Appeal or Christmas Appeal, can still be recognised with a Bronze Certificate without registering or submitting evidence. However, students who wish to progress through the VSM and work towards a Bronze Medallion or higher must register for the program and submit evidence as they complete the required activities and award requirements.

School Support

24 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A VSM SUPERVISOR?

The VSM Supervisor acts as the school's primary contact, supports student participation and assists with confirming student involvement and award eligibility.

25 HOW MUCH ADMINISTRATION IS REQUIRED FROM SCHOOLS?

The VSM has been designed to minimise administration by aligning with activities many schools already run. The VSM Team provides resources and support to assist schools throughout the process.

26 WHAT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS AND SUPERVISORS?

Once registered, schools, students and VSM Supervisors gain access to a range of dedicated resources designed to support participation in the VSM. The VSM Team also works alongside your local School Engagement Officer to provide tailored support, answer questions and help identify opportunities that best suit your school's context and students.

27 WHO CAN SCHOOLS CONTACT FOR LOCAL ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE?

Schools can contact their local Youth Engagement Officer or the VSM Team directly via vsm@vinnies.org.au.

Accessibility & Inclusion

28 CAN THE PROGRAM BE ADAPTED TO SUIT DIFFERENT SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY CONTEXTS?

Yes. The VSM is designed to be flexible and can be adapted to suit different school settings, communities and available opportunities.

29 CAN THE VSM BE ADAPTED FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING OR SUPPORT NEEDS?

Yes. The VSM Team is committed to supporting meaningful participation for all students and can work with schools to identify suitable adjustments where required.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Accessibility & Inclusion

30 CAN THE VSM BE ADAPTED FOR SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITIES WITH LIMITED RESOURCES OR FUNDRAISING CAPACITY?

Yes. The VSM recognises a wide variety of service activities and does not require schools to fundraise or access specific resources in order to participate. Please reach out the VSM team directly to discuss alterntive options.

Volunteering, Donations & Safety

31 HOW SHOULD DONATIONS OR FOOD BE DELIVERED?

Coordinate with your VSM Supervisor to arrange delivery to your local Vinnies Service or Vans Hub. Vinnies NSW operates a wide network of services and support centres across the state, which can be explored here. Your local School Engagement Officer can also help identify the most appropriate drop-off location and advise of any local requirements.

32 CAN STUDENTS VOLUNTEER AT A VINNIES SHOP, VAN OR SERVICE?

Potentially. Volunteer opportunities vary depending on student age, location, safeguarding requirements and local capacity. Please contact your local Youth Engagement Officer and or visit our Vinnies Volunteering link to find out more.

33 CAN STUDENTS VISIT VINNIES SITES OR WORK DIRECTLY WITH PEOPLE VINNIES ASSISTS?

No. Any direct engagement opportunities are subject to safeguarding requirements, risk assessments and local approval processes.

34 WHAT IF A VINNIES OPPORTUNITY IS NOT AVAILABLE LOCALLY?

Students can still participate through a wide range of approved service, leadership, fundraising and community engagement activities. The VSM Team can help identify suitable alternatives within your local context.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Maggie Lipu - Service Medallion Senior Coordinator

Mary Fairburn - Service Medallion Coordinator

Email: ***vsm@vinnies.org.au***