

ST MERKORIOUS CHARITY

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FROM THE FOUNDER

PAULA NICOLAS

As we wrapped up another incredible year at St. Merkorious Charity, the final quarter of 2024 was nothing short of heartwarming and inspiring filled with community spirit, connection, and compassion, especially as we approached the Christmas season.

One of our most cherished traditions, the annual Street Feast, was held once again in both Parramatta and Sydney, where we had the honor of serving meals to over 500 people experiencing hardship. These events are a reminder of why we do what we do—to bring comfort, dignity, and joy to those who need it most.

We also came together at our Rhodes outreach service to celebrate Christmas, creating a space where everyone could experience the joy and togetherness of this blessed occasion.

None of this would have been possible without our incredible volunteers. From the tireless work in the kitchen and warehouse, to the energy and generosity shown during hamper-packing evenings and weekly outreach services—you are the heartbeat of SMC. To show our appreciation, we hosted a beautiful Christmas lunch at our soon-to-be coffee shop in Hudson Park, and it was a joyful time shared by all.

This quarter, we were also proud to collaborate with amazing organisations to spread awareness and extend our impact. These included:

- Rally4Ever's Breakfast in support of Mental Health Month
- MAC's CrankIt Foundation's 10th Year Anniversary celebration
- Jason Yat-Sen Li's Walk and Talk at Henley Park, Enfield

We were also honored to host Djimi Barber and Vivien MacJohn from GambleAware, who delivered a powerful "Let's Talk Gambling" presentation during GambleAware Week at our Rhodes outreach service. Their insights were invaluable in raising awareness about gambling harm within our community.

Additionally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to MP Sally Sitou and the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation for joining us at our Monday Night Outreach Service in Rhodes. Their presence and support significantly uplifted our community during the festive season.

To our sponsors, supporters, and volunteers—thank you. Your continued support allows us to serve with love and purpose. On behalf of everyone at St. Merkorious Charity, I wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and a joyful New Year.

With heartfelt thanks,
Paula Nicolas





Parramatta Outreach Service - Every Monday Evening

PRINCE ALFRED SQUARE

Each Monday evening, our Parramatta outreach service brings together fellowship, charity, and compassion. At Prince Alfred Square, our dedicated volunteers gather to serve hot, nourishing meals and distribute around 80 care packs to individuals and families facing hardship.

But the impact goes far beyond food and essentials. With every meal handed out and each care pack offered, our volunteers also provide something just as vital—human connection. They take the time to sit, listen, share stories, and offer kindness without judgment. These simple gestures can mean the world to someone going through a tough time.

Week after week, rain or shine, our team creates a welcoming and safe space where people feel seen, heard, and valued. Their consistent presence is a powerful reminder that no one is alone, and that our community stands in solidarity with those doing it tough.

Through this ongoing act of service, our volunteers aren't just addressing hunger; they're helping to restore dignity, hope, and a sense of belonging, one Monday evening at a time.



Fairfield Service - Every Monday Lunch Time

FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE

Every Monday lunchtime in Fairfield, SMC offers more than just a meal, we provide a place of welcome, care, and connection for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, including local refugees doing it tough.

Our Fairfield service brings together 50–80 individuals for free morning tea and a freshly prepared hot lunch, all served with kindness by our dedicated volunteers. But it's not just about food, it's about community.

Guests are invited to relax, enjoy friendly conversation, and share both common and unique stories and interests in a safe and inclusive setting. Each gathering also features uplifting activities designed to spark joy, foster connection, and support wellbeing.

These weekly lunches are more than a routine, they're a powerful expression of compassion, inclusion, and hope. Through simple, heartfelt service, we're building a stronger, more united community where everyone feels they belong.



Woolloomooloo Outreach & Fellowship Service - every Friday evening

164 CATHEDRAL ST. WOOLLOOMOOLOO (NEXT TO POLICE STATION)

Every Friday evening, our outreach team heads to Woolloomooloo to support those doing it tough. We offer hot, nutritious meals, desserts, drinks, tea and coffee, along with essential items like clothing, pillows, blankets, and care packs.

But the impact goes beyond material aid. Our amazing volunteers bring warmth, conversation, and a sense of connection to around 60–80 individuals each week. Their presence turns a meal into a moment of dignity, and a cup of tea into a sign of hope.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every volunteer who generously gave their time and energy last Friday. Your smiles, kindness, and unwavering commitment made a real difference.

Every meal shared, every kind word spoken, and every caring gesture reminded us that even the smallest act of compassion can change someone's day. Because of you, those facing hardship are reminded that they are seen, valued, and not alone.

Thank you for being the heart of our mission. Together, we're building a more compassionate community—one act of service at a time.



Rhodes Outreach Service

2 CAVELL AVE RHODES

On Monday evening, 21 October 2024, St. Merkorious Charity proudly hosted its Rhodes Outreach Service—an evening filled with warmth, joy, and genuine connection for some of Sydney’s most vulnerable.

On alternate months, we transport between 80–100 individuals—including rough sleepers from Martin Place and Parramatta—to the welcoming hall of St. Merkorious Church in Rhodes. There, guests are offered more than just a nourishing, sit-down meal. They receive free haircuts, clean clothing, takeaway hampers, and, just as importantly, the opportunity to connect with others in a safe, inclusive, and judgment-free environment.

This special service brings together our City and Parramatta communities for a night that celebrates dignity, support, and shared humanity. Guests enjoy delicious meals, refreshments, haircuts, hampers, and even the excitement of prize giveaways—all made possible by the dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of our supporters.

We were honoured on 21 October 2024 to welcome Vivien and Djimi from the NSW Government’s GambleAware program, who delivered an engaging and informative workshop as part of GambleAware Week. Their session offered practical insights into recognising gambling-related harm and highlighted available support services—providing invaluable information to those in attendance.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Office of Responsible Gambling for awarding St. Merkorious Charity a \$140,000 grant over two years to continue providing meals and hampers to those in need.

We are also deeply grateful to the Australian Government and Ms. Sally Sitou MP for their generous \$100,000 grant to improve the facilities at our Rhodes Church Hall—ensuring a more comfortable and dignified experience for our clients. We sincerely appreciated Sally’s presence on the night.

A special thank you goes to the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation for their \$10,000 grant, which will directly support the continuation and growth of our Rhodes Outreach Service. The team’s presence on the 21 October 2024 was a true highlight, bringing smiles to both guests and volunteers alike.

Together, we are creating a more compassionate and connected community—one meal, one conversation, and one act of kindness at a time.



VOLUNTEERS

We were honoured to welcome 12 incredible staff members from Santa Sabina College on Monday, 14 October 2024, as part of their Service and Spirituality Day.

Their energy, compassion, and commitment were felt across every part of our operations — from preparing meals in the kitchen to lending a hand in our warehouse and assisting with our Fairfield outreach service.

Your generosity and dedication truly made a difference. Not only did you brighten our day, but you also brought hope and joy to the many individuals we serve.

Thank you for being a part of our mission and for helping our community grow stronger through your service.



A huge thank you to the incredible students from St Patrick's College, Strathfield, who gave their time to volunteer at SMC during the school holidays!

Whether you were preparing meals in the kitchen or working tirelessly in the warehouse, your enthusiasm, hard work, and generous spirit did not go unnoticed.

We are deeply grateful for your support. Your efforts have had a lasting impact on our operations and the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for showing what community, service, and teamwork truly look like. Let's continue to keep the spirit of giving alive!



We extend our heartfelt thanks to the 9 dedicated staff members from De La Salle Caringbah who volunteered with us on Friday, 18 October, as part of their Staff Spirituality Day.

From lending a hand in the kitchen to assisting in the warehouse, your efforts made a meaningful difference to those in need across our community.

We're truly grateful for your time, compassion, and commitment to service — thank you for standing with us in support of those doing it tough.



VOLUNTEERS

A huge thank you to the wonderful students from Strathfield Girls High School who volunteered with us on Monday, 11 November 2024.

Your enthusiasm and dedication in helping pack our Street Feast bags truly made an impact.

Thanks to your support, we're able to continue spreading kindness, hope, and practical help to those doing it tough. We're so grateful to have you as part of our mission.



A heartfelt thank you to the incredible students from Santa Sabina College for generously dedicating your time and energy on 22 November 2024 to support St Merkorious Charity.

From preparing meals in the kitchen to packing hampers in the warehouse, your hard work has had a meaningful impact on the lives of those who need it most.

Your compassion and commitment to serving the community are truly inspiring. Thank you for being a part of our mission to make a difference.



A heartfelt thank you to the incredible team from KPMG Australia who generously gave their time to support St Merkorious Charity on 26 November 2024.

Your invaluable help in the kitchen and your warm, generous spirit made a real difference.

Together, we're spreading hope, compassion, and practical support to those who need it most. We're so grateful to have had you with us.



MAC's CrankIt Foundation's 10th Year Anniversary

We were thrilled to support our good friend Pat at the MAC's CrankIt Foundation's 10th Year Anniversary celebration on 16 October 2024 by providing food and snacks for the event. The Foundation is dedicated to alleviating the suffering of individuals and communities impacted by poverty, illness, disability, discrimination, and misfortune. Through youth empowerment initiatives, including sports, counselling, employability programs, and confidence-building, MAC's CrankIt is creating real and lasting change. Their mission beautifully aligns with ours, and we're proud to stand beside them in service of the community.



Rally4Ever's Breakfast

We were honoured to take part in Rally4Ever's Breakfast at NSW Parliament House on 22 October 2024 in recognition of Mental Health Month. It was a privilege to hear from special guests Dr Marjorie O'Neill MP and Hon. Rose Jackson - minister for housing and homelessness, who spoke powerfully about the meaningful and lasting impact that Rally4Ever's programs have within the community. We're proud to stand alongside such dedicated advocates for mental health and wellbeing, and grateful to be part of this important conversation.



Corrilee Foundation

On 26 October 2024, St Merkorious Charity had the privilege of attending the screening of the award-winning documentary *Left Write Hook*, followed by a powerful Q&A session led by Tanya Lee from the Corrilee Foundation, at Dendy Cinema in Newtown.

The film captures an extraordinary 8-week program that blends boxing and creative writing to support survivors of sexual abuse on their healing journey.

Through its innovative approach, *Left Write Hook* harnesses the cathartic energy of boxing as a means for survivors to transform pain into power, while creative writing prompts offer access to the unconscious, where memories of trauma are often stored.

Rooted in research and lived experience, this program is a testament to resilience, recovery, and empowerment. We look forward to seeing its life-changing impact continue to grow across Australia.



Share the Dignity

St. Merkorious Charity would once again like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Share the Dignity for their generous donation of essential bags filled with hygiene products for women, teenagers, and new mums doing it tough.

Your ongoing collaboration with St. Merkorious Charity continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable individuals in our community. We deeply appreciate your dedication to restoring dignity and providing hope where it's needed most.



Parramatta Street Feast

In recognition of the World Day of the Poor, we were truly honored in collaboration with the Parramatta Archdiocese to provide nourishing food on Wednesday 13 November 2024, for the Parramatta Street Feast a special event dedicated to bringing the community together in support of individuals and families facing hardship.

The Street Feast is much more than a meal; it is a gathering that fosters connection, compassion, and dignity for those who often feel overlooked or forgotten. By sharing food and fellowship, we create a space of hope and belonging where everyone is welcomed and valued.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff and volunteers whose passion and tireless efforts behind the scenes and on the ground made this event a remarkable success. Their commitment to serving others embodies the true spirit of community care.

We also want to sincerely thank our fellow sponsors, Payce Foundation and Paynter Dixon, whose generous support was instrumental in making this event possible. It is through such meaningful partnerships that we can continue to reach more people and bring positive change to those in need. Together, we are reminded that small acts of kindness and service can have a powerful impact—bringing comfort, hope, and connection to those experiencing poverty and struggle in our community.



Sydney Street Feast

At the 6th Annual Sydney Street Feast held on Friday 15 November 2024 in collaboration with the Sydney Archdiocese and Payce Foundation, Anthony Fisher OP warmly welcomed those experiencing hardship to join in sharing a meal, offering a powerful example of God’s love, compassion, and companionship.

This special gathering is a reminder of the profound impact we can have when we come together with open hearts to support one another. As the scripture says:

“In every way we demonstrate that we are God’s servants ... as poor and yet enriching many.” — 2 Corinthians 6

These words beautifully capture the spirit of the day, a call to serve with humility and kindness, enriching lives through genuine connection and care.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making this event so meaningful. Through your generosity and service, we continue to spread hope, dignity, and love to those who need it most.



One & All Hub

In November we had the pleasure of visiting the One & All Hub, a vibrant and inclusive center that offers creative and holistic programs for people of all abilities. We were fortunate to take part in their Earthly Expression and Earth Moves sessions, uplifting experiences that combine meditation, art, and movement therapy. The Hub is a truly welcoming space, filled with energy and warmth, where healing and creativity come together under the guidance of a compassionate and dedicated team.



Walk and Talk

On Saturday, 14 December 2024, we had the pleasure of taking part in a wonderful community event at Henley Park, Enfield, a marvelous morning filled with movement, meaningful conversations, and community spirit.

It was inspiring to see people coming together not just for physical wellness, but also to connect, share stories, and support one another. Events like this remind us of the power of community and the importance of taking time to care for both body and mind.

A special thank you to Jason Yat-Sen Li for his continued dedication and the fantastic work he does to strengthen and uplift our local community.

We're proud to stand alongside passionate changemakers and look forward to many more moments like this!



CHRISTMAS HAMPER APPEAL 2024

A huge thank you to the wonderful parents, students, and teachers at St Patrick's College Strathfield for your incredible generosity towards our 2024 Christmas Hamper Appeal. Your contributions will bring joy, hope, and comfort to families in need this holiday season.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to the caring community at St Martha's Catholic Primary School, Strathfield, whose kindness and support have made a significant impact. Your donations will help spread the true spirit of Christmas to many in our community.

Thank you to the dedicated staff, parents, and students from Holy Cross College Ryde for your ongoing generous support — it has been truly inspiring!

A special shoutout to Montessori Academy Australia for your generous donations toward the appeal. Your support plays a vital role in providing much-needed relief and spreading festive cheer.

Lastly, we want to acknowledge the amazing students and staff at Burwood Girls High School and Strathfield Girls High School. Your dedication and generosity are helping to make a real difference this Christmas.

Together, your support is helping us make this festive season brighter and warmer for those who need it most. Thank you for joining us in sharing the spirit of giving and community.



Christmas Hamper Packing Evenings

A huge shoutout to all the amazing volunteers who joined us for our hamper-packing evenings on 11 and 13 December 2024!

Your energy, dedication, and compassion made a tremendous impact — helping us prepare and deliver Christmas hampers filled with love, care, and essential items to those doing it tough this festive season.

We truly couldn't do this without you. Your support reminds us of the power of community and the incredible things we can achieve when we come together for a common cause.

From all of us at St Merkorious Charity, thank you for being part of our family and for helping us spread joy, hope, and dignity this Christmas.



MONDAY NIGHT RHODES SERVICE CHRISTMAS DINNER

On Monday, 9 December, we were delighted to host our annual Rhodes Christmas Dinner, a heartwarming evening filled with community, celebration, and festive cheer.

Two buses brought clients from both Parramatta and Sydney City, giving many the chance to relax, connect, and enjoy a special Christmas meal in the company of others. It was a joyful night where everyone was welcomed with warmth, laughter, and holiday spirit.

A heartfelt thank you to the incredible volunteers who turned out in force to support the evening — your kindness and generosity helped make it a truly memorable experience for our guests.

Special thanks as well to our talented musicians, Mark and Paul, who brought the Christmas spirit to life with their beautiful live music, setting the perfect festive atmosphere.

Events like this remind us of the importance of connection, dignity, and community — especially during the holiday season.

Thank you for helping us make Christmas brighter for those who need it most.



Burwood Mayoral Christmas Appeal 2024

We were honoured to attend the Burwood Council Mayoral Christmas Party, hosted by Mayor John Faker.

Thanks to the generosity of Burwood Council and the Mayor, we received wonderful donations of hygiene products and packaged foods for our Christmas hampers.

We are deeply grateful for their ongoing support and commitment to helping those in need this festive season.



Australian Chinese Charity Fund visit

St Merkorious Charity is deeply grateful to the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation (ACCF) for their generous \$10,000 donation supporting our Rhodes Outreach Service in 2024.

ACCF's commitment to uplifting communities was evident during their visit on 21 October, where they met clients, volunteers, and MP Sally Sitou at our Rhodes service. Later, on 17 December 2024, we welcomed Faith and Michael from ACCF to our Strathfield South headquarters, where they toured our facilities and learned more about our work.

Their support strengthens our efforts to combat food insecurity and reach those most in need. Thank you, ACCF, for helping us make a real difference in the community!



2024 Christmas Party: Celebrating Community and Generosity

Our 2024 Christmas Party, held on Saturday, 21 December, was a truly heart-warming celebration of everything we achieved together this year. Surrounded by volunteers, family, friends, and sponsors, we reflected on the power of collective effort and the joy that comes from serving others.

- Volunteers & Staff – Your tireless dedication turned ideas into reality and ensured every guest felt welcomed and cared for.
- Family & Friends – Your constant encouragement keeps our mission vibrant and strong.
- Sponsors – A special thank-you to our major partners Payce Foundation, Dasco Australia, and the Skylife Foundation. Your generosity provided the resources that made this festive celebration possible and will continue to uplift those we serve long after the decorations are packed away.

Because of all of you, this season was unforgettable. May the spirit of kindness we shared carry us into the new year, inspiring even greater acts of hope and compassion. Thank you for being an essential part of the St Merkorious Charity family.

