

Issue 34 April - June 2025

FROM THE FOUNDER

PAULA NICOLAS

This quarter has been an exciting and heartwarming time at St. Merkorious Charity, marked by two incredible milestones that celebrate our growth and community spirit.

On 19 June, we proudly held the Sod-Turning Ceremony for our future Food Distribution & Sustainable Community Garden. Funded through the NSW Government's WSIG program, this \$9 million investment will greatly expand our capacity to prepare, pack, and distribute food to thousands more people in need, while also creating spaces for training and volunteering. We were honoured to have the support of Jason Yat-Sen Li MP, Sally Sitou MP (Reid), John-Paul Baladi (Mayor of Strathfield), Benjamin Cai (Deputy Mayor), and Rachelle Harika (Labor Councillor). Our target completion date for this transformative project is December 2025 — stay tuned to our social channels for updates as this vision comes to life.

Just days earlier, on 14 June, we hosted our Under the Olive Tree Morning Tea, a heartwarming café-style event that brought the community together over delicious food, warm conversations, and soulful music — all in support of those doing it tough. We extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated and joined us, including our wonderful guests Jason Yat-Sen Li MP (Strathfield), Cr Alex Yang (Burwood Council), and Veronica B. This is what wellbeing is all about: creating spaces that lift spirits and connect hearts.

Beyond these memorable events, we've also welcomed so many incredible new volunteers this quarter, including teams from Mobileyes, One&All Hub, and the Sovereign Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta. I cannot thank all our volunteers enough for their ongoing generosity, compassion, and dedication to helping those in need. It was a privilege to celebrate some of these amazing individuals during National Volunteer Week (19–25 May 2025).

In April, we were proud to take part in the CBCC Youth Expo, where our inspiring Sports Ambassador, Joya Nicolas, shared how volunteering can be a true game-changer for young people, opening doors to personal growth, professional opportunities, and lifelong friendships.

We are also deeply grateful to Burwood Council for awarding St. Merkorious Charity the 2025 Community Grant of \$5,000, helping us continue serving those who need it most. Another special moment this quarter was welcoming Bishop Joseph, General Bishop of Africa from the Coptic Orthodox Church, who visited our centre to thank us for the donations from our latest container shipment supporting communities in Zimbabwe.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for walking this journey with us. Together, we're making a difference that lasts.

With heartfelt thanks,
Paula Nicolas



Parramatta Outreach Service - Every Monday Evening

PRINCE ALFRED SQUARE

Every Monday evening, our Parramatta outreach comes alive with warmth, fellowship, and generosity. Thanks to the dedication of our amazing volunteers, Prince Alfred Square becomes a place of connection and care, where we share around 80 nourishing meals and care packs with our community who need it most.

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible team for bringing their compassion, energy, and teamwork to Monday Night Service, helping to feed and uplift our community.



Fairfield Service - Every Monday Lunch Time & MobilEyesDental

FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE

St. Merkorious Charity is proud to stand alongside our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Every Monday lunchtime, our Fairfield service opens its doors to 50–80 locals for free morning tea and lunch. But it's about more than food — it's a space to connect, share stories, and celebrate both our common bonds and the richness of our differences in a truly inclusive atmosphere.

On Monday 23 June, we were also delighted to welcome MobilEyesDental to our service. They generously provided free examinations, helping to ensure that these services are within everyone's reach. We are deeply grateful to the MobilEyes team for their care, compassion, and commitment to our community.



Woolloomooloo Outreach & Fellowship Service - every Friday evening

164 CATHEDRAL ST. WOOLLOOMOOLOO (NEXT TO POLICE STATION)

Every Friday evening, our Woolloomooloo outreach shares warmth, care, and connection with 60–80 people in need. Our dedicated volunteers serve hot meals, desserts, drinks, and care packs — and through friendly chats and open hearts, they bring comfort and companionship.

A big thank you to our amazing volunteers whose kindness lights up every Friday night — you don't just serve meals, you lift spirits.



Rhodes Outreach Service

2 CAVELL AVE RHODES

From time to time, St. Merkorious Charity hosts a special evening dedicated to uplifting Sydney's most vulnerable. We welcome around 80–100 guests, including rough sleepers, transported from Redfern, Martin Place, and Parramatta to the St. Mary & St. Merkorious Coptic Orthodox Church Hall in Rhodes.

Here, they're treated to a warm, sit-down meal, free haircuts, fresh clothing, and take-home hampers. The hall fills with laughter, conversation, and a sense of belonging — a safe, welcoming space where guests can relax, share their stories, and experience kindness without judgment.



One&All Hub Opening Evening

On Thursday 3 April, we were delighted to join the One&All Hub Opening Evening: Showcase & Market. From handmade artworks and clothing to unique accessories, homemade pickles, sweet treats, and everyday essentials — we were thrilled to take home some of the beautiful creations crafted by talented individuals of diverse abilities.

A special thank you to Romy, Founder and Executive Director, whose tireless advocacy continues to inspire positive change in the disability sector. Her vision for a holistic community hub — nurturing mind, body, and soul — has truly come to life.



CBCCYouthExpo - Inspiring the Next Generation

On 9 April, we were thrilled to join the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce Youth Expo at Western Sydney University's Bankstown Campus. Our Sports Ambassador, Joya Nicolas, shared her passion for volunteering and how it can be truly life-changing for young people.

Joya reminded students that volunteering builds empathy, skills, confidence, and purpose — it not only makes a difference in others' lives but transforms your own.



BankstownBruins

On Saturday 27 April, we loved showing up for the Bankstown community and cheering on the NBL1 Bankstown Bruins as they faced off against the Central Coast Crusaders. Special thanks to Christian Gobolos, CEO, for generously providing complimentary tickets, it was a fantastic night of sport and community spirit.

Congratulations to the Bruins on securing the win! We wish them the very best for the rest of the season, both on and off the court.



Sovereign Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta

A heartfelt thank you to the wonderful women from the Sovereign Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, who generously volunteer in our kitchen every Tuesday. Your kindness, dedication, and compassionate hearts make a real difference to our mission. We are truly grateful for your support—God bless you all!



Donation from Pastor Abraham Akkary-Faith in Action Ministries

A heartfelt thank you to Pastor Abraham Akkary from Faith in Action Ministries for your generous donation on 9 May. Your kindness is truly appreciated!



Visit from Bishop Joseph-General Bishop of Africa

On 13 May 2025, we were privileged to welcome Bishop Joseph, General Bishop of Africa from the Coptic Orthodox Church. Overseeing four countries, he is working closely with communities in Zimbabwe who will benefit from the donations in our most recent container shipment.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed, your generosity is creating lasting change and touching lives across the globe.



National Corrections Day

On Friday, 16 May 2025, we were honored to join Bankstown Community Corrections in celebrating National Corrections Day.

We were humbled to receive a Certificate of Appreciation for the food services we provide to the community. Thank you for your continued support and partnership.



MTC - Collaboration

A big thank you to Vanessa from MTC Australia for visiting us on 19 May. She plays a key role in coordinating student work placements at St. Merkorious Charity, and we're grateful for her ongoing support.



National Volunteer Week 19-25 May 2025

As part of National Volunteer Week 2025, we were honoured to nominate a group of our dedicated volunteers to attend the Premier's Volunteer Reception, hosted by The Honourable Chris Minns MP, Premier of New South Wales, and represented by The Honourable Jodie Harrison MP, Minister for Women, Seniors, and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

We're proud to share that Rosa Hanna, Amal Mckenny, Donna Yousef, Moro Zaki, George Rofail, and Emad Fanous represented St Merkorious Charity at this special event celebrating volunteers across the state. While only a few could attend, this recognition belongs to all our amazing volunteers — your dedication, generosity, and community spirit are at the heart of everything we do.



National Volunteer Week with David Saliba, MP for Fairfield

During National Volunteer Week, David Saliba MP (Member for Fairfield) presented awards to Makram Barousom and Adeeb Mikhail for their outstanding contributions to our charity and community. Makram continues to shine as an all-rounder, volunteering across multiple services, while Adeeb has faithfully led our Fairfield service for the past eight years. As Adeeb retires, we thank him for his incredible dedication — he will be deeply missed, and we wish him all the very best!



Burwood Council Volunteer Recognition Awards Ceremony

On 22 May 2025, we joined the Burwood Council Volunteer Recognition Awards to celebrate two of our outstanding volunteers — Jack Maalouf (Dasco Australia) and Phil Morgan — who received this well-deserved honor, presented by Burwood Mayor John Faker and Sally Sitou MP for Reid.

Phil has faithfully led our Parramatta Monday night service for many years, while Jack has done the same for our Woolloomooloo Friday night service. These two don't just drive vans, they drive change. With their dedication, our mission keeps moving forward. Thank you, Jack and Phil, for your commitment and impact.



NS Rydges Hotel Parramatta

A huge thank you to Alexander from Rydges Hotel Parramatta for the generous donation of shampoo and conditioner! Your support means so much, these essential items will make a real difference for people experiencing homelessness.



4KAutomotive

A heartfelt thank you to Shelby from 4K Automotive for visiting St. Merkorious Charity and supporting our mission. We're excited about this collaboration and look forward to working together!



Burwood Community Grant Presentation

On 10 June, we were thrilled to attend the Burwood Council 2025 Community Grants Program Presentation and honoured to be selected as a grant recipient. Thank you to Burwood Council and Mayor John Faker for supporting our mission to serve those in need.



Under the Olive Tree Fund Raiser

Thank you to everyone who joined us on Saturday, 14 June for a Mediterranean-style morning tea, filled with delicious food, warm conversations, and soulful music.

A special thanks to MC Fred Frangi, Sea Sweet Patisserie, Beshara Honey, Kookies, our chefs Ghada, Alvin, and Enny, Saj Station, Kebouski, DJ Panos, and our distinguished guests Jason Yat-Sen Li MP, Benjamin Cai Deputy Mayor of Strathfield, and Veronica B for making the morning extra special. Moments like these celebrate community, culture, and connection, supporting the vital work of St. Merkorious Charity and highlighting the generosity and hospitality of our community. Thank you to our incredible team for creating spaces that lift spirits, foster kindness, and support those doing it tough.



Sod - Turning Ceremony

On 19 June, we proudly hosted the official Sod-Turning Ceremony for our future Food Distribution & Sustainable Community Garden — a milestone funded by the NSW Government (~\$9 million) and to be built by DASCO Australia.

We were honoured to be joined by Jason Yat-Sen Li MP, Sally Sitou MP, Mayor John-Paul Baladi, Deputy Mayor Benjamin Cai, and Councillor Rachelle Harika, along with our major sponsors: DASCO Australia, PAYCE Foundation, and Skylife Foundation.

This new space will expand our impact, allowing us to prepare, pack, and distribute food to thousands more in need, while offering vital training and volunteer opportunities. This isn't just infrastructure — it's a commitment to scale up grassroots impact, support local visionaries, and build a healthier, more connected community.

Congratulations to the entire St Merkorious Charity team — every wall we build represents a village of people who believe in our mission.

Target Completion: Christmas 2025





St. Merkorious Charity

WINTER APPEAL 2025

Essential items for donation

Packaged food:



Noodles, tuna, chicken, spam, beans, lentils, soups, canned fruit, sweet and savory biscuits, honey, jam, sugar, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, pasta, rice, long life milk, cornflakes and cereal, gift cards.



Additional Products:



Body wash, shaving cream, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, tissues, shampoo/ conditioner, deodorant, hand wash, sanitizer and wipes, new socks, new beanies, new blankets, new scarves.

UNEXPIRED & NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ONLY



CONTACT US: 0421 743 220 OR
CHARITY@STMERKORIOUS.COM.AU