

Lismore Soup Kitchen

July 2025



From the President Mieke Bell

2025 is a special year in the life of The Lismore Soup Kitchen.

On Sunday 6th April many volunteers celebrated 35 years since Don Ferguson first shared his evening meal with homeless people, in the basement of the Church of Christ in Keen Street.

Don had visited Sydney one cold wet winter and had asked rough sleepers why they didn't move to Lismore, where the weather was warmer. The answer always was "there is no food security, there isn't a soup kitchen".

When Don returned, he started sharing his evening meal with people on the street, and the Lismore Soup Kitchen was born!!

The Winsome building is 100 years old this year, and it is 15 years since the LSK bought the Winsome. The celebration event on the 6th was wonderful, with Ian and his band leading the singing of some rousing songs, Ross, a visitor from Melbourne bringing greetings from the soup kitchen in St Kilda, and various people sharing how the Winsome has impacted their lives. Tim Costello, our patron for many years, acknowledged 35 years of dedicated volunteering as the strength of our organisation, weaving that into an interesting reflection of the good Samaritan narrative.

As I reflect on the Winsome, many words come to mind: Caring, Supporting, Partnerships, Intense support for rough sleepers, Laughter, Joy, Love, Faith, Friendship, Conversations, God, Vibrant Community, Tears, Donations, Residents, Rich Community, Good Pantry, Rous Road Hall, Pastoring, Committed Sunday casserole cooks, Music, Singing, Choir, Talents and Gifts, Sharing, Help, Hope, Empowerment. We have much to celebrate.

Big thanks to all our volunteers, supporters and service providers.

The Lismore Soup Kitchen

11 Bridge St
North Lismore 2480

PO Box 6045
South Lismore 2480

Website www.winsome.org.au

facebook.com/lismorewinsome

Donations:
winsome.org.au/donate

Ph 6622 4055

Winsome Community Centre

11 Bridge St North Lismore
9am - 1pm Daily

Good Pantry

51 Wyrallah Rd
East Lismore
10am-2pm
Monday to Friday
Ph 0422 981 363

Goonellabah Site

39 Rous Rd
cnr Rous Rd and Pleasant St
Goonellabah Good Pantry
10am - 2pm
Wednesdays

ABN: 56 250 463 120

The Lismore Soup Kitchen is a Tax
Deductible charity and is an
incorporated association.





Winsome Cafe and Kitchen

Sharon Dwyer

It's been great once again to have a year full of dedicated volunteers serving our people in the community who need food security and a welcoming environment.

Some volunteers are giving us 2-3 days a week which is 12-18 hours of their time. We are thankful to those who also cook meals at home on the Sunday roster and bring in this meal for us to serve a hot meal on Sundays, which is the hardest day to find volunteers.

We have been assisted with teams from Mountain Blue Farms and a Motorbike Riders group giving their time to cook a BBQ. These BBQ events have become very popular and the meals on these days are increasing. We take advantage of the beautiful backyard at the Winsome and set up tables and chairs in good weather.

For this year, January 1st to Tuesday 10th June, our current number of meals served was 12,751. Since we were closed for 7 days due to Cyclone Alfred and a day in April with no electricity, we are now averaging 83 meals per day. This has been an increase of 20 meals per day since last year.

We are still receiving some amazing donations, a full box of catering eggs from Organigrow each week and 5kg of venison mince for the last 6 months has been extremely helpful.

I am looking forward to the rest of the year, working with dedicated volunteers doing their best to make sure everyone has a welcome and safe experience at the Winsome.



Winsome Meal Impact Update

12,751

MEALS SERVED

From January 1 to June 10, 2025



Currently serving
an average of
83 meals per day



The Good Pantry

Sharon Cooper

The past year has been very busy at The Good Pantry, we have seen an increase in customers and we are now averaging 250 customers every week.

We continue to offer a variety of groceries, we also provide free fruit, vegetables and bread five days a week to those who shop. We have started stocking beef mince at a very reasonable price, and this has proven to be very popular with our customers. We are now receiving frozen meals from FareShare. We receive the meals once a month. This is a new service to The Good Pantry.

The Goonellabah pop up Good Pantry on a Wednesday is growing as more people become aware of us being open. It is in a great location for the people of Goonellabah who do not have transport or are not able to make the drive downtown.

In April the women from NORWACS (Northern Rivers Women and Children’s Services) spent a morning with us. It was a fun morning with the ladies from NORWACS showing customers that you can make a tasteful meal on a budget. They made a vegetable curry using ingredients that you can purchase at the Pantry. They had sample bags of groceries for our customers and cookbooks with clever ideas on how to have nice meals on a budget or without electricity.

Housing and Mental Health Support

The Winsome works closely with key agencies to support people experiencing homelessness & housing crisis.

We liaise with Homes NSW, Social Futures, Momentum Collective, Women Up North Housing, Northern Rivers Housing and Northern Rivers Community Gateway.



Members: 3268 (as at 12 June 2025)
Individuals who visited at least once in:

	2025	2024	2023
Jan	422	355	303
Feb	504	386	354
Mar	433	375	447
Apr	440	388	340
May	555	457	424

In May, The Good Pantry hosted a Food Interagency meeting, this is held about four times a year. It is a good time to get together with other agencies that offer food relief of one description or another.

This term we have senior students from Woodlawn with us once a week. They are working alongside the volunteers. They are here under the supervision of a teacher and as part of a particular subject.

I am thankful to the 17 volunteers who work at The Good Pantry and are very committed to offering our customers good service. Also a big thank you to the customers who donate fruit and vegetables and all other items.

For those with Mental Health needs, we connect with Lismore Community Mental Health, Wellways, Open Minds and form part of the Consortium Steering Committee for the Medicare Mental Health Centre (formerly called ‘Head 2 Health’ - run by Open Minds, located at the Southern Cross University campus).

We regularly engage with agencies in the sector through the Mental Health Clinical Partnerships Network.



Treasurer's Report 2024/2025 Ridley Bell

The financial year 2024/2025 has had its financial challenges, as does each year, whether they are due to simple cost of living increases, increased numbers of folks seeking meals, or due to extraordinary events such as flooding.

Each cook has a float to purchase the bulk of the ingredients of the meal that they are preparing, and over the past 12 months, the amount spent to provide the day's meals has increased by about 10% over the past year.

The number of meals served each day varies, and some days are certainly busier than others in terms of meals provided. This cost of living increase is mirrored in the community in general, with it being an important factor affecting the recent parliamentary elections.

The Good Pantry continues to be an important resource centre for people that are struggling to put food on the table. The partnership between the Winsome and the Catholic Diocese of Lismore continues to be important in providing cut price items as well as free items where possible. There is no profit or margin added to the price of the grocery items, and any items donated for free are given away at no charge.

Serious issues with heat and cold weather extremes in the Wyrallah Road building are spurring us to locate a more suitable building from which to run the pantry.

The Winsome 500 Club is still very active and faithful, with some members having given on a monthly basis for many years now. Contributions vary from \$2 to \$2000 per month from over 100 contributors. This provides a regular income that is so important to the sound financial base of the organisation. A big thank you to all our wonderful supporters who regularly donate to keep the work of the Lismore Soup Kitchen going.

At the Winsome there are times when there have been incidents and emotions flare up, often involving people under lots of personal stress. It was decided by the committee to engage Region Security, a local firm that provides crowd control and general supervision, and they were able to place security personnel at the Winsome each day from 9.00 am until 1.00 pm. This has provided a sense of security to volunteers and patrons alike, and has been very much appreciated by our volunteers who appreciate the wonderful support.

The overall financial situation of the Soup Kitchen is healthy, and the financial statements for this year and past years can be read on the ACNC website.

Volunteering at the Winsome Bernie

Standing at the counter, chop those vegetables. Throw them in the pot, let's get cooking. Sweep those floors, wash those dishes. Now it's 11:30 am, time to serve up some meals. This is a typical day in the kitchen at Lismore's Winsome Hotel, where I am a volunteer.

Hi, my name is Bernie, and for the past couple of years I have been a volunteer at the Winsome and if you ask me about my experience there I have only positive things to say about the place. I feel the Winsome is a special place, due to the philanthropic nature of what the organisation does. The Winsome serves a hearty free meal for anyone who wants or needs it, and provides much needed support for those doing it tough and are struggling to make ends meet. Not only will you get fed, but you can also leave with a sandwich for later on!

The Winsome provides much needed accommodation for a select few lucky campers, tapping into the body of locals who are struggling to find stable housing. There are also opportunities for people to see a doctor, among other services besides the daily meal.



All the workers in the kitchen are volunteers and I have come to believe that volunteers- not just in the kitchen, but throughout the organisation - form the backbone of the Winsome, enabling it to run efficiently and achieve the outcomes it does. The volunteers step up, donate their time and make it all happen.

There is something special about volunteering- from the camaraderie that develops between oneself and workmates, as we can all feel we are doing something a bit special, to the sense of satisfaction that is generated by ones work helping others.

Also nice are the thanks we receive from satisfied and grateful patrons, who leave with comfortably full bellies. I have been working every Saturday for a while now (though I did stop for a spell after the flood) and volunteering at the Winsome has become an important part of my life.

I look forward to many more productive and helpful days in the future. Who knows, I might even see you there.

Northern Rivers Zero - Homelessness Project

We are an active part of an initiative to reduce rough-sleeping in our region – using the 'Advance to Zero homelessness' methodology, which is gaining momentum throughout Australia & the world. This regional strategy brings together government agencies like Housing and Health, together with non-government agencies and frontline homelessness services like the Winsome.

This new collaborative strategy formed a year ago & appointed its first Project Coordinator 6 months ago.

The Winsome contributed some funding towards this initiative and has been represented in the Regional Leadership Group and the Working Group focused on implementing the project locally.



Community Partnerships
Ian Phillips

I've just wandered into our Winsome space today having returned from spending a week in flood recovery centres on the Mid North Coast as a chaplain.

The Winsome is such a good place to be, and even though some Winsome friends might be struggling with tough places in life, there is so often a warmth and generosity in the Winsome space that speaks volumes for the best of what the space can be. In our humble imperfect human offerings to each other, hope can rise.

In our Goonellabah Hall space, we run our Good Pantry (low cost groceries) on Wednesdays each week. The hall space is also used by a variety of community groups on various days, including several support groups, two different church groups, a mums and bubs group, an after school program, and several other more ad hoc uses. It is our desire to be able to provide the venue at minimal cost to groups which will bring benefit to the community in Goonellabah.

Just like at the Winsome, we encourage partnerships with other services which can help our community flourish.

One project which has been a thought bubble for a while now is a weekly lunch barbecue at the Goonellabah Hall probably on Wednesdays when the Pantry is open.

If you would like to be involved in helping run this, please ask me.

0427 248 955 | ian.phillips@winsome.org.au



Desert Road
Mel Wells

Over the past year, our journey with Desert Road has provided a wealth of lessons for many of us.

As we strive to meet the needs of those who come to Desert Road, we encounter various challenges. Fortunately, we have received invitations from other organisations that allow us to deepen our understanding of the needs of women leaving prison. This includes the opportunity to visit women in prisons across NSW, fostering communication between myself and them. This connection helps us grasp what they require to set them on the right path once they are out of prison.

Throughout these twelve months, we've received numerous applications, including a potential addition to our team later this year.

We are truly grateful for our wonderful volunteers and everyone who supports us through prayers and other means. I'm excited to see what the next year holds for Desert Road.

A heartfelt thank you to all who support our mission!

Mel Wells



Services & Support at The Winsome

Steve Smith



We want to thank and acknowledge the amazing clinicians and service providers who visit the Winsome every week to offer their expertise, empathy & understanding for our patrons:

Mondays:

Riverlands Alcohol & Other Drug (AOD) Centre: Treatment options for substance use (Mel)

Tuesdays & Thursdays:

Orange Sky: Mobile Laundry providing clothes washing & drying + a shower facility.

Wednesdays:

GP Clinic: Dr. Tony Lembke, Dr. Luke Hogan, Jodie Dardengo from The Alstonville Clinic

Wednesdays:

Information, advocacy and referrals regarding legal matters: provided by retired Solicitor Philip Wykeham.

Thursdays:

Psychologist: John Lord – counselling, Mental Health Care Plans, help with DSP + NDIS

Fridays:

Liver Clinic & Needle and Syringe Program: promoting harm-reduction, testing & treatment.

The Winsome seeks to provide holistic support to any and all people who come to our service.

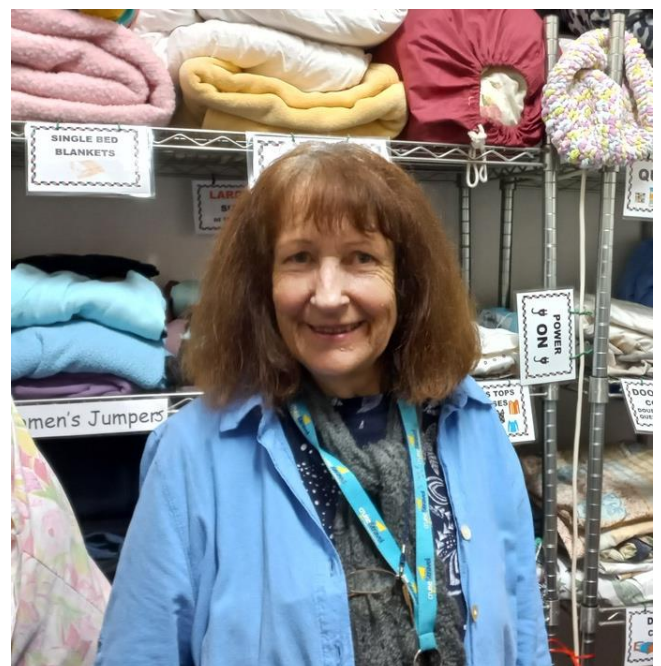
Patrons are greeted by tea, coffee, toast, fruit, sandwiches and a nutritious main meal often with a dessert. Free loaves of bread and fruit donated seasonally by local farmers are also on offer.

Physical needs are met through 'Keryn's Cubby' – providing clothing & footwear, jackets & rain-coats, blankets & bedding, towels & toiletries, sleeping bags and other items as required.

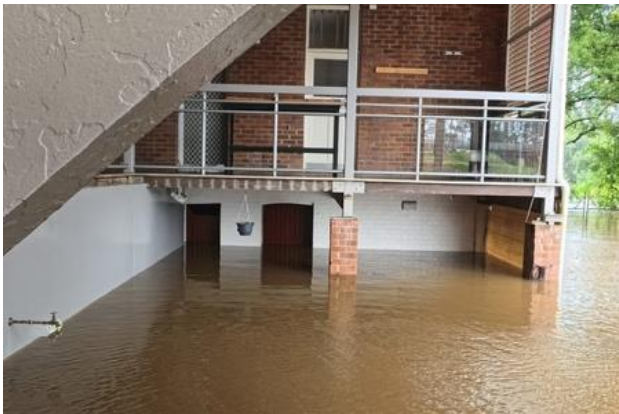
We thank individuals and community groups for their donations which help to restock our shelves.

We also acknowledge Keryn (pictured below), one of our Day Managers, who devotes hours of diligent work to curate and organise all of the donated clothing and goods, supported by our other valued team members.

In-house and visiting services also offer support for people who face challenges in areas of their life – including social, emotional, health, housing, medical, financial and legal dimensions.



Flood Evacuation



In early March Lismore experienced yet another flood, this time courtesy of Tropical Cyclone Alfred. This provided us with the opportunity to enact our Flood Evacuation Plan, drafted after the 2022 flood.

After several days of prep and planning and many trips with trailers, we made the call to evacuate our premises the day before the official SES evacuation order was issued. With valuable support from a few volunteers, some members of the public, and a Mountain Blue farm crew, plus a truck & driver (thanks Peter!), we successfully evacuated the entire basement and ground floor within hours and well before the flooding peaked.

Thankfully, the river only reached 9.3m – meaning that our basement was inundated but the ground floor, Café, Kitchen & Clinic all remained unscathed.

Huge thanks to all the helping hands & willing workers who showed up & stood up – and to all involved in the Winsome team.

Community Service Spirit



In October we again welcomed a team of students and teachers from St. Phillips Christian College, Cessnock on their Community Service Field Trip.

Led by their dedicated Chaplain Alex Green, the team of students helped out in The Winsome Café & Kitchen & assisted Resilient Lismore with flood recovery rebuilding work.

In addition to serving with their time and energy, the students presented The Winsome with a cheque of \$1,900 to support our work – the fruit of their fundraising efforts over the year! We wish to thank Alex, teachers and all the students for their generosity and willingness to serve.



Building Repairs & Maintenance



As was highlighted by Mieke, The Winsome Hotel turned 100 years old this year! This majestic old beauty of a building is a tribute to the craftsmanship and quality of construction of a bygone era.

However the passage of time (and weather!) certainly takes its toll on such a building. We wish to acknowledge and thank our faithful tradespeople and technicians who continue the upkeep and repairs required to see this building fulfil its function and provide the perfect venue for this service.

Thank you to all who contribute to the life and work of The Winsome.



Special Thanks to:

Ben the Builder (Ben Russell – ‘Rustique Carpentry’) – Ben has recently replaced and repaired our Heritage listed wrought-iron balustrades running along our First Floor verandah (pictured above). Ben continues to conduct minor and major repairs to our ageing building (and assists our flood evacuation!) plus does valuable work rebuilding homes across the region that were impacted by the devastating 2022 floods.

David Cowan – our dedicated and diligent Electrician who has been servicing our building for well over a decade and has been systemically improving our electrical systems and circuitry.

Douse Fire – regular servicing & improvements to our Fire Safety system.

Lismore City Plumbing – who respond promptly and eagerly with any of our Plumbing problems.

Faircloth & Reynolds – for continued support and service of our kitchen appliances.

Zac Fleming – Gas Plumber – providing service and maintenance for our ovens

Paul – our resident **Greenkeeper & maintenance man** – whose knowledge and experience is invaluable.

Richmond Waste - for their generous support over 15 years.

RapidClean - for their prompt service and support of our work.