

Lismore Soup Kitchen

July 2026



From the President Mieke Bell

Coming to work at the Winsome is a joy — I skip to work! Volunteering at the Winsome energises me. These are my own reflections, but they are often echoed by many of our volunteers, some of whom are now in their eighties.

The atmosphere at the Winnie is usually peaceful and relaxing, and it's wonderful to see our patrons and volunteers engaged in great conversations, and to hear the sound of laughter so often.

Another year has passed — a year of great and dedicated service to all who come into the Winsome and the Good Pantry in East Lismore. Our organisation continues to grow, and I am sure you will enjoy the reports from our contributors in this newsletter.

My thanks to all of our volunteers and patrons, who together make up our vibrant and caring community.

Mieke Bell



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

cnr Rous Rd and Pleasant St
Community Hall & New Pantry
Development (under construction)

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

Numbers are definitely increasing at the Winsome. We have experienced many high numbers of meals served this year already. On a BBQ day in May we recorded 149 meals! Recently on a Saturday, which is usually recorded as 65 to 85 meals, we sent out 107 meals. This was such a surprise.

For this year, from January 1st to June 13th, we have served 15,179 meals, this is an average of 93 meals per day. This average has increased by 10 from the average recorded at the same time last year.

Our Cooks continue to make the kitchen a happy place and create wholesome meals. We have an average of 70 volunteers giving their time every month to help the Winsome run smoothly. I appreciate the kindness and dedication that all the volunteer staff are showing everyday.

We have introduced a Meal Donation Box in the Cafe, as our meals continue to be free of charge. This donation box is an opportunity for our patrons or any visitors to donate with what they can. It has been working out so well, with donations of usually over \$100 every 7-10 days.

With various donations from local businesses, big and small, we are feeding more people than ever before. A big thank you to Organigrow who continues to donate a full caterer's box eggs every week.

Today, we served 100 meals with a long-standing recipe from a volunteer Cook named Rose who would make a tasty Chicken Curry back when we were serving in the Tin Shed behind Norco.



Winsome Meal Impact Update

15,179

MEALS SERVED

From January 1 to June 13, 2026

93

Currently serving
an average of
93 meals per day



The Good Pantry

Sharon Cooper

The Good Pantry, one of the community services run by the Lismore Soup Kitchen, continues to play an important role in meeting practical needs across Lismore and the surrounding community, providing low-cost groceries, free bread, fruit and vegetables, and other essential items. For many individuals and families, it offers not only affordable food but also a welcoming, supportive place where people can shop with dignity and feel part of a caring community.

Free produce is sourced from two local supermarkets five days a week, ensuring customers have regular access to fresh fruit and vegetables. Some of our customers also generously donate produce of their own, and Five Loaves often drops off excess fruit and vegetables for us to share. This generosity is a real blessing, and these donations make a meaningful difference to the people who rely on the Pantry each week.

Alongside food, we receive donations of clothing, shoes and accessories, which are made available to customers at no cost. This ensures useful items are passed on to people who can benefit from them rather than going to waste, and it reflects the spirit of generosity that surrounds everything we do.

The Pantry now has more than 4,000 registered members, with around 250 people shopping each week. New customers continue to sign up regularly — a sign that the need for affordable food and practical support remains strong. We are open from 10am to 2pm, five days a week, excluding public holidays, offering a consistent and reliable service the community can count on.

I am especially thankful for the 20 volunteers who give their time, energy and care to keep the Pantry running smoothly. Their commitment is what makes each day possible, and the peaceful, friendly atmosphere they create supports our customers and makes the work lighter and more rewarding for everyone involved.



We are also blessed to have Year 12 students from Woodlawn College's 'Catholic Faith in Action' class volunteer with us for a couple of hours every Friday. They help wherever they are needed and bring a positive, willing attitude to everything they do. They are a joy to have with us, and their involvement is greatly appreciated by volunteers and customers alike.

A recent addition has been the sale of frozen meals supplied by Invercauld House. At just \$5 each, they give customers another low-cost option for convenient, nourishing food, and have proved a valuable addition to the range we can offer. Mince is also available at a small cost, sourced from a local meat works, giving households another affordable option for preparing meals for themselves and their families.

Together, these services reflect the Good Pantry's ongoing commitment to meeting practical needs, reducing food insecurity and supporting the wellbeing of our local community — work made possible by the continued generosity of our donors and supporters.



Our Goonellabah Good Pantry Popup was also very popular. It is currently not operating during the new Pantry build as parking has become very limited there.



Treasurer's Report

2025/2026

Ian Phillips

At the November Annual General Meeting I took over as treasurer from Ridley Bell, who has served faithfully in the role for many years. I'm glad to say Rid hasn't gone far — we've effectively swapped seats, and he continues to support the work as assistant treasurer, which means the organisation loses none of his long experience and care.

Each financial year brings its own pressures, whether from ordinary cost-of-living increases, growing numbers of people seeking help, or extraordinary events beyond our control. This year was no exception, but I'm pleased to report that the organisation's finances remain on a sound footing.

At the Winsome, each cook buys the bulk of the ingredients for the meal they prepare. Over the past twelve months the cost of these meal ingredients rose by around 16%, driven both by rising grocery prices and by the growing number of meals served — now averaging 93 a day, up from 83 this time last year.

The Good Pantry deserves a word of its own. Demand has grown steadily over recent years — from an average of around 420 individuals per month a few years ago to about 460 last year, and around 550 each month this year. This rising need reflects the genuine hardship many in our community are facing, and it is sobering to see. Spending on sourcing food for the pantry rose by about 26% this year, driven both by these greater numbers and by the higher cost of groceries. The pantry adds no profit or margin to its items, and donated goods are passed on free of charge, so what it spends is largely recovered through what it sells at cost.

What we can be glad of is not the need itself but our capacity to meet it: more food is reaching households doing it tough, at the lowest cost we can manage. Our partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Lismore continues to be vital in keeping prices low and supply steady.

The Winsome 500 Club remains active and faithful, providing regular monthly income that is so important to the sound financial base of the organisation. A heartfelt thank you to every one of our 500 Club members, and to all our supporters who give regularly to keep the work of the Lismore Soup Kitchen going.

We are also very grateful to the Mountain Blue Foundation for providing significant monthly support, and also for providing funding for construction of the Good Pantry site on Rous Road.

The presence of Region Security at the Winsome each day continues, and remains much appreciated by volunteers and patrons alike, providing a welcome sense of reassurance.

Despite the year's rising costs, the Soup Kitchen finished the year in surplus, and its overall financial position remains healthy. The financial statements for this year and previous years can be read on the ACNC website.



Northern Rivers Zero - Homelessness Project

The Winsome is engaged with the NR ZERO PROJECT. NRZ continues to grow in momentum and effectiveness as it draws together government and non-government agencies towards a common goal. We aim to “advance to zero” rough-sleeping by 2036 by making homelessness rare, brief and non-repeated. This is an ambitious goal but one we are deeply committed to along with our passionate partners and collaborators. Huge innovations have been introduced and are being embraced and embedded into daily practice. Regional networks have been forged and strengthened, local collaborations have been formed and refined & as a result, vulnerable individuals have been triaged and assisted into supported accommodation or suitable treatment and support.

IN MEMORIAM

We pay our respects to and honour the memory of the following people who were part of our Winsome community over recent years.

Lee Mason

a Winsome resident for several years. Lee was a gentle soul with a friendly & jovial nature. Lee passed away peacefully in October 2025.

Stephen Goodchild (aka “Stavros”)

Stavros was a unique & colourful character who was well known around the Northern Rivers region, usually carting around a Guitar or busking in the streets of Lismore, Ballina or Byron.

Stavros passed away in January 2026.

Jason Myles

a regular patron who was a solitary figure. Jason passed in February 2026.



Volunteering at the Winsome Marie AKA “Princess”

My name is Marie, AKA “Princess” because I wear a Tiara. I have been a part of the Winsome Family for at least ten years, volunteering in the kitchen. I am still here because I love it so much!

I feel it is the best job I have ever had, and the best workplace I have ever been in. My heart is full of gratitude from being accepted, appreciated and loved here.

The Winsome doesn't only accept the many patrons, but also the many people who volunteer in whatever capacity .

The Winsome is a place to give and to receive; to love and feel love; to listen and support others, and also to feel supported; to experience kindness and friendship, and so much more!

VOLUNTEER WITH US as a Night Manager

One of our core roles is that of Night Manager at the Winsome. We have several people who serve in that space, and it would be good to have a few more on roster. It is an 'overnight stay' in the comfortable "night manager's room", to be on call if there are any issues overnight. Usually, it would be one night per week.

If you'd like to know more, please contact Steve Smith: steve.smith@winsome.org.au.



Desert Road

Mel Wells

What is Desert Road?

Desert Road is a not-for-profit program operating under the Lismore Soup Kitchen, also known as "The Winsome."

We walk alongside women both during and after their incarceration. Our aim is simple: to show that there are people who believe in their potential and who will stand with them when they are offered love and support.

We provide a range of practical and personal support, including help with housing, Centrelink, banking, recovery groups, mental and general health services, spiritual care, and one-on-one mentoring.

Desert Road has made significant strides recently, especially since we chose to pivot towards a more outreach-focused approach. In the past three months alone, we have supported 11 women. Among them, we helped a woman in the Hunter region retain visiting rights for her two children, so that she can now see them every second weekend. This brings the total number of women supported by Desert Road to 22 since we began in April 2024.

As we enter our third year, I find myself reflecting on how Desert Road has grown into a remarkable program — one that offers women a sense of love and care at the very times they may feel most isolated and powerless.

During this period, we have also helped several women secure bail to enter rehabilitation, supporting their recovery in a way that is so often out of reach while incarcerated.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to Desert Road — whether through donations, volunteering, or partnership. We are truly blessed by the outpouring of support, which we are able to pour straight back into the lives of the women who join the Desert Road family.

If you would like to know more about Desert Road, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Many blessings,

Mel Wells

www.desertroad.org.au

mel.wells@desertroad.org.au



Services & Support at The Winsome

Steve Smith



The Winsome is a place of welcome for all who step through the door. On any given day, this can be well over 100 people that seek support, services or a succulent meal!

We view all of our patrons as a person to be met not a problem to be fixed. And so we strive first to meet & understand each person as an individual, to hear their story if they choose to share it and then to provide holistic 'wrap-around' support. Many of our regular patrons come not just for a hot meal but for company & social connection. Our team of Day Managers, Café volunteers, Baristas & Helpers all combine to create that sense of warm welcome, acceptance & the offer of a listening ear (and raisin toast!)

Region Security work amongst us & alongside us to support the peaceful operation of our Café, and the safety & wellbeing of our volunteers and patrons alike. We offer our huge thanks & appreciation to JD, Dom, James, Jyrailh and Levi.

One of our Day Managers, Keryn dedicates hours each week to curating all of our donated clothing & bedding items to line the shelves of 'Keryn's Cubby'. This is a tiring & never-ending task but is so appreciated by all the team who can readily walk in & quickly locate items to help someone into warm, dry clothing & shoes or supply them with essential toiletries, hygiene products, linen, bedding and bags.

Thank you Keryn!

We were successful in receiving a grant to help rough-sleepers with essential camping equipment through a StreetSmart "Hidden Homelessness" Community Grant.

2026 has seen Mel Wells join me in providing Casework support to patrons to address homelessness, housing, health, dental health, mental health, substance use, and legal & financial matters. It has been our privilege to support people into more secure and suitable housing or to help improve their life prospects & promote positive change.

Over 230 individuals have been given personally tailored support in the past year.

Our visiting Specialist services play a pivotal role providing Clinical expertise and professional care & treatment for our patrons who often face multiple challenges.

On the following page is a snapshot of what services have been delivered during the last year.



"The Longriders CMC serving up great food with 'Vincent', our barbecue trailer, at the Lismore Skate Park, one Saturday."

Our visiting Specialist services play a pivotal role providing Clinical expertise and professional care & treatment for our patrons who often face multiple challenges. Below is a snapshot of what services have been delivered during the last year.

DOCTORS' CLINIC (Wednesdays).

Over 630 consults provided in the last year. We thank the incredible team from Alstonville Clinic for their dedicated service. Dr. Tony Lembke, Dr. Luke Hogan, Dr. Josh Kingston. Aided & assisted by the amazing Receptionists Jodie, Cathy and others who run a tight ship - keeping the Doctors on their toes & the patients in their seats.

PSYCHOLOGIST (Thursdays).

Over 120 support sessions provided in the last year. Registered Psychologist John Lord offers counselling and mental health support for many. We thank John for his dedication & empathetic care for our patrons – often providing extra sessions on other days to accommodate the needs of the people he supports.

MENTAL HEALTH NURSE (drop-in Tues/Thurs or as needed).

We warmly welcomed Brogan O'Neill in April this year - a Clinical Nurse Specialist from Lismore Mental Health Acute Care Service, NNSW Local Health District. Brogan provides early intervention, assessments & access to clinical treatment options plus her own special brand of warmth, positivity and exuberance! Welcome Brogan!

**ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (drop-in as needed)**

Our treasured Mel Delaney from Riverlands AOD (Alcohol and Other Drug) Service continues to provide this crucial outreach service as she has done for over 3 years. Mel can meet with individuals confidentially and discreetly to understand their issues of Substance Use, hear their desire to change & help them to explore options around treatments, harm minimisation and community supports available. Thankyou Mel!

LEGAL INFORMATION & ADVICE (drop-in alternating Tuesdays + Wednesdays)

Retired Solicitor & long-time friend of The Winsome, Philip Wykeham, drops in to speak with people about their Legal matters. Philip helps people understand & navigate the system & refer them to further support when necessary. Thankyou Philip!

ORANGE SKY Mobile Laundry Van (up to 14 wash loads per day + 8 showers)

Now well into their 4th year at The Winsome, Orange Sky attend twice each week on Tuesday & Thursday mornings to provide clothes washing/drying & a shower facility. Huge thanks to Team Leader Dave & dedicated volunteers Matt, Lorraine, Sue, Patrick, Douglas, Chris, Lisa, Denni and others.

HAIRDRESSER

We thank Tim Mulcahy for generously providing free Hair Cuts to patrons & volunteers. Tim is a qualified and highly experienced Hairdresser who has created quite a buzz (cut).



Construction of The Good Pantry's New Home on Rous Road

Construction of The Good Pantry's new home at our Rous Road site in Goonellabah is progressing well.

The team at Joel Jensen Constructions has been doing an excellent job, despite several weeks of wet weather and the challenge of excavating through solid rock and large boulders.

As the project takes shape, we're looking forward to hosting monthly community BBQs at the site. These gatherings will provide an opportunity for volunteers and community members to see the progress firsthand and share in the excitement of what is being created.

If construction continues on schedule, The Good Pantry will be operating from its new location by Christmas.

There is still plenty of work ahead, but it's exciting to see the vision becoming a reality. Thanks to everyone who's part of helping make it possible.



Volunteering at the Pantry

Lillian



"I know what it's like to need help, and now I do what I can to help others."

Lillian has been volunteering at the Good Pantry for the past year, and everyone who walks through the doors is welcomed with her warm smile and caring spirit.

Volunteers like Lillian are the heart of our local community. Through simple acts of kindness, they help create places where people feel seen, supported, and valued.

We are so grateful for the volunteers who give their time to serve others every week.

If you'd like to be part of making a difference in our local community, we'd love to hear from you. Drop us a message to find out how you can get involved.

Volunteering at the Winsome

Lindsay

Lindsay has been a volunteer at the Winsome Café for about 6 years. If you come to the Winsome Café on a Tuesday you'll see him serving up coffees at the barista station. He also works in the kitchen on Fridays.

A few years ago Lindsay was going through a marriage separation and his mental health was not in a good place. He was living in a caravan and feeling very sorry for himself.

He sensed he needed a deeper purpose. A friend told him to reach out to the Winsome.

"On my first day at the Winsome, everyone was so welcoming to me," Lindsay said, "I felt very comfortable, and I felt it would be a great fit for me."

"Volunteering at the Winsome has helped me become part of a community. It has given me a purpose, and it has given me friends. I have made good friends here, and I continue to make new friends."

"Now I miss it if I can't make it. I love volunteering at the Winsome."

