



Media release

Support for flood-impacted health and aged care workers

Inspired by their founder's motto, "Deeds, not words", a congregation of sisters on the Northern Rivers has organised a generous donation to 64 flood-affected hospital and aged care staff.

When Lismore's Presentation Sisters heard how many staff members of St Vincent's Lismore and St Joseph's lost everything in the devastating floods, they wanted to help. They immediately launched an appeal and rallied their worldwide network of friends and supporters of the congregation.

The result was a \$250 donation for each of the most-affected staff members and a personal note which said: "Our foundress, Nano Nagle, worked during challenging times. Her family motto of 'Deeds not words' inspires us still at this time. Please know our prayers are with you."

St Vincent's CEO, Steve Brierley, said the sisters – who set up their congregation on the Northern Rivers in 1886 – had a long association with the hospital.

"They took over pastoral care at St Vincent's 42 years ago when the Sisters of Charity handed over the hospital to the Diocese of Lismore," he said.

"Although not actively involved in pastoral care today on campus, the Lismore Congregation is still keen to support the community in any way they can. They heard that many of our staff were impacted by the floods, and their leader, Sr Anne Jordan, quickly offered to help.

"We thank them for their kindness and generosity, and I know our staff are grateful for their support."

Along with the Presentation Sisters, other Catholic healthcare institutions provided substantial contributions to help St Vincent's flood-affected employees. The board of St Vincent's indicated it will supplement donations and other offers of help with in-kind and financial support as appropriate. The board already unanimously supported a special wage and salary payment to flood-affected staff.

Mr Brierley said it was important to provide meaningful and ongoing support after the floods.

"After the sudden impact of the floods, we witnessed great heroism from our flood-affected staff, and most have returned to work despite their losses," he said. "It's a testament to their dedication to patient and resident care, and their desire to reclaim a sense of normality and dignity through work.

"However, the hospital is mindful this is just one phase of a long response to collective trauma. The next phase, which is a sense of disillusionment, will need to be fully appreciated and sensitively worked through before the rebuilding and restoration phase can begin."

St Vincent's program of assistance has included helping find ongoing accommodation for displaced staff, transport, supplying essential items, supporting their social, emotional and spiritual needs where appropriate, and providing a secure and stable work environment.

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Photo caption: St Vincent's employees Elissa and Luke Virtue were badly impacted during Lismore's floods, but quickly returned to work to support their patients. Photo courtesy Mark Bowling.

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