

The Real Australian



A huge mission field

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Training up for bush ministry in Lightning Ridge

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An encouraging start to 2026

10

BCA Directory

THE REAL AUSTRALIAN IS A REGISTERED
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BCA will hold its first annual supporters meeting soon (online). Further details will be communicated via email. If you would like to be on the email list, and do not already receive BCA emails, please send a message to jessica.kim@bushchurchaid.com.au

Front Cover: BCA is excited to commence a new partnership with Nungalinga College to employ co-teachers

Pray to the Lord of the Harvest

Some of you may remember that a number of years ago I encouraged us all to build a simple trigger into our daily routine to pray regularly for God to raise up workers for the harvest field. It was nothing clever or complicated, just an ordinary reminder like putting on the kettle or turning on the coffee machine, to pause and to ask our gracious Lord to send more workers.

This is a command of Jesus seen in Matthew 9 that still rings with urgency even today, and you will read later in this magazine that this same prayer sits at the heart of our own daily rhythm as a staff team. Each morning, as we gather to begin the day, we pray together for God to raise up workers for the harvest field.

Over the years I have also been encouraged to hear from supporters who quietly took this idea to heart and have kept faithfully praying. Persistently praying, often without anyone else knowing. I want to say thank you to them.

As you read through this issue of *The Real Australian* you will come across stories of new Field Staff commencing with BCA. These are real people, with real callings, stepping into real places across rural, regional and remote Australia. They are a visible reminder that God does answer prayer. I hope you will take the time to read those stories with gratitude, and perhaps with renewed confidence that the Lord of the harvest is at work.

And can I encourage you that if you have never developed a regular rhythm of praying for more workers, to think about what that might look

like for you? It might still be the kettle or the coffee machine. It could be a postcard of BCA Field Staff on the fridge that catches your eye each day. It might even be something as simple as praying while you walk the dog. As you can imagine, the method matters far less than the habit.

I'm convinced that every person in the bush should have every chance to know Jesus. That conviction continues to drive our prayers, our planning, and our willingness to send workers where they are needed, trusting God to provide what is required along the way.

So let me encourage you to keep 'going the distance', asking the Lord of the harvest to send workers. Whether this is something new for you, or an old habit that has been part of your life for years, keep asking. Who knows what God might do as His people continue to pray.



Greg Harris
National Director

Thank you for your generosity **NEXT25**

At the end of last year, we asked for your support to help us go the distance for the NEXT 25. We are looking to train the next 25 future ministers, reach the next 25 communities, build the next 25 ministry initiatives and bring the Good News of Jesus to those longing to hear.

Through your generous giving we raised \$244,000 towards our NEXT 25 appeal. Thank you!! Your generosity will build on 106 years of faithful gospel ministry in rural, regional and remote Australia so the next generation won't miss out on hearing the Good News of Jesus.



SOUTH EAST QLD EVENTS

Special guests Field Staff David & Zoe Browne (Gladstone)

Devotions by Simon Reeve (former Field Staff Woolgoolga)

St Philip's Anglican Rochedale
Saturday 11 April | 9am – 12noon

St Peter's Anglican Maroochydore
Sunday 12 April | 2:30pm – 5pm

St Bart's Anglican Toowoomba
Saturday 18 April | 9am – 12noon

Surfers Paradise Anglican
Sunday 19 April | 2pm – 5pm

SYDNEY REGION EVENTS

Special guests Field Staff James & Charly Boardman (Kelso)

Devotions by NSW/ACT Regional Officer Paul Sampson

Lower Mountains Anglican Glenbrook
Monday 4 May | 7pm to 9pm

St Paul's Castle Hill
Tuesday 5 May | 7pm to 9pm

St Swithun's Pymble
Wednesday 6 May | 7pm to 9pm

All Saints Oatley West
Thursday 7 May | 12pm to 2pm

St Thomas' North Sydney
Thursday 7 May | 7pm to 9pm

2026 BCA VICTORIA DINNER

From the Ranges to the Ridge: Reaching North West New South Wales for Christ

Guest Speaker: Rod Chiswell, Bishop of Armidale

SATURDAY 2 MAY 2026

5:30pm Drinks for 6pm Dinner

GLEN WAVERLEY ANGLICAN CHURCH

800 Waverley Road (Cnr Watsons Road)

Spit roast dinner \$50 per person

Childminding available (please advise)

Register by 27 April

Enquiries 03 9457 7556 or vic@bushchurchaid.com.au



To register for any of these events scan the QR code or visit bushchurchaid.com.au/events



The joy of Christian fellowship

Pine Creek is a small town north of Katherine with a population of around 300 people. It takes an hour to drive there, and it's actually a part of our parish (it's a big parish!). Historically, there is a service on the third Sunday of every month. Issy & I were able to go for the first time in mid-January, and a couple of other church members came with us.

There are only a couple of regular attenders at Pine Creek and one of those was away, so the four of us joined with Rosemary to swell the congregation to five members. Rosemary is a local lady with an infectious energy. Together we sang and prayed and read the Bible, we shared communion and chatted over a cup of tea after the service. It was a joy!

In particular, it was so wonderful to see Rosemary's excitement in sharing the service with us. We didn't just see it; she told us multiple times! It's easy to take Christian fellowship for granted when you're surrounded by your brothers and sisters at church every week. Even a so-called 'small church' in Sydney is completely different to Rosemary's experience at Pine Creek. Sunday was a reminder

that Christian fellowship is a precious gift from God. It will be a privilege to share it with Rosemary in the months and years to come.

If you are able, can you pray for Rosemary and the church at Pine Creek? Pray for God to strengthen their faith and give them great joy in our monthly gatherings. Ask God to bring others from town along to church too so that they can hear the Gospel. You can pray similarly for the service in Mataranka, which is another town an hour's drive in the other direction!

And maybe you can thank God for your church and the joy of gathering together with God's people week after week. What a precious gift!

Pat O'Keefe



A huge mission field

With 6850 residents and 45 percent who claimed no church affiliation or religion in the 2021 Census, the regional town of Strathfieldsaye is a huge mission field.

When BCA-supported Field Staff Rob & Michelle Edwards began ministry in Strathfieldsaye, there was just one service at 9:30am which was traditional and the average age of the congregation was 73. Rob & Michelle wanted to do something that was more family-focused for their growing community.

Not only did the Census show a distinct lack of church affiliation, it also showed that the average age in Strathfieldsaye was 36, with 31 percent of people aged 19 and below.

"We were lucky to have six kids at our 9.30am service and three of those kids were our boys!" says Rob. "So, we thought, 'what can we do to try and bridge that gap?'"

Rob & Michelle started planting a seed for an afternoon service.

"In November 2022, we invited people to come along to share our vision," explains Rob. "I was expecting 25 people but 48 people came, which was pretty amazing."

4 pm church started off as fortnightly

with the aim being to make church as engaging as possible for both adults and kids. Sometimes that involves using videos, visuals or even a version of messy church.

"At first we had regular services on the first and third Sundays, but in Term 4 of 2024, we changed things up a bit by also meeting on the second and fourth Sundays. Another couple led the adults in watching a video and then a discussion time, and I'd take the teens out and lead a Bible study which was great for those who were preparing for baptism," says Rob. "We had nine teenagers who were baptised at the end of 2024!"

When there is a fifth Sunday, a combined service is held at 11 am followed by lunch. "It's important to try and bring the congregations together," says Rob. "Otherwise, these groups of faithful people wouldn't worship together."

The afternoon service is made up of Christians who are new to the area and have found a place that supports them and their kids. "We



FAR LEFT:
Free community
barbecue

TOP RIGHT:
A 4pm Christmas
service

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Rob Edwards
with the nine
young people who
were baptised

are all praying that it will only keep growing. If everyone came each week, we'd have about 50 people, but most Sundays arvo church averages in the mid-30s."

In encouraging news, both services have been slowly growing. "One lady new to the area came on Christmas Eve, she's really keen and has returned each Sunday since," says Rob. "And another lady has been to the first two services of the year. God is at work."

Rob changed things up a bit in 2025, with the first, second and third Sundays being a normal afternoon church service, and the fourth Sunday a social gathering and time of fellowship. "People bring something to share for afternoon tea and the kids hang out together and play games. This time of fellowship is so important as you get to have conversations you just can't have on the other Sundays."

The young people of the church have really thrived thanks to the 4 pm gathering. Not only were those nine young people baptised, four young people were confirmed last year. A youth group has formed out of the service, and this year Rob is looking to start a regular youth Bible study and

train the young adults up so they can lead youth group.

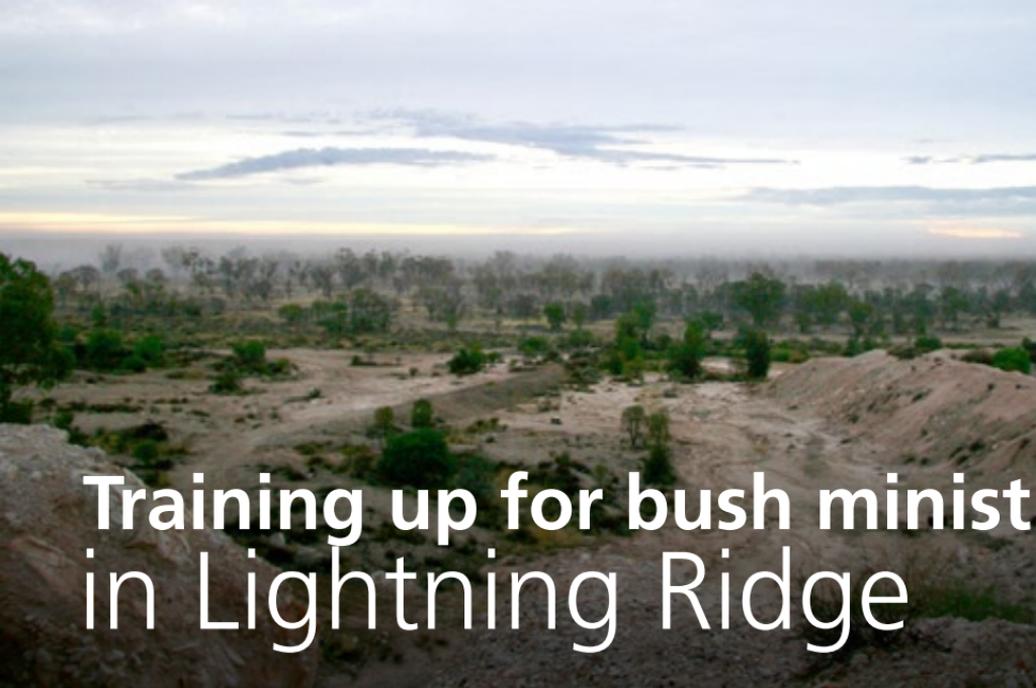
"One of our young adults organised for us to be involved in Operation Christmas Child last year," says Rob.

"One Sunday after church we all packed gifts into shoe boxes to send into Samaritan's Purse. It was great to see this young lady take the initiative and organise this."

The church also looks to reach out into the community. One weekend they held a community barbecue. "We had just one person from the community attend," says Rob. "But what encouraged me was that it showed where the heart of our church is – 25 church members came! I thought what can we do with that? What are our church members passionate about? What are their gifts? What's within the realms of possibility? So we are currently organising a pop-up shop that we will hold later this year"

Please pray for Rob, Michelle and Strathfieldsaye Community Church; that their congregations would continue to grow and that their outreach into the community will bear fruit for God's Kingdom.

Janine van den Tillaart



Training up for bush minister in Lightning Ridge

After being supported by BCA through our Theological Bursary Initiative for the past two years, Samuel Ogg has completed his studies at Moore College, and this year joins us as a Minister in Training. Samuel, Grace and their kids Tommy and Josie have moved to Lightning Ridge where they will serve alongside Kurt & Bec Langmead.

I grew up in Lithgow in a Christian family. So, from a very early age, I heard the Gospel. But when I was at university I was not really living like a Christian and started chasing after things of the world. I eventually hit a point where I realised I was quite empty, and that there was something not right with my life. It was at that point that the wonderful gospel teaching I'd gotten through my life came back to me. I saw the truth of the Gospel. I saw that Jesus really loved me and came to save me. I was reminded that my life wouldn't be complete unless I knew Jesus. So, I asked Jesus to be my king, and this was a really significant moment in my life.

I was studying to be a primary school teacher at university and as

I understood the Gospel more, I saw that I didn't really want to teach in schools, I wanted to serve Jesus. So I finished up the degree a couple of months early and started MTS (ministry training strategy) in the church I grew up in.

God gave me the ability to teach and engage with people and I just couldn't see anything better to do with my life than full-time ministry.

In 2022, together with Grace and our then four-month-old Tommy, we moved from Bathurst to Sydney so I could attend Moore College.

When we were at college and thinking about what the future might look like, country ministry was always at the top of our minds.



FAR LEFT:
Lightning Ridge

TOP RIGHT:
The Ogg family

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Lightning Ridge
Community Church

College hosted a lunch with Greg Harris, Mark Calder (Bathurst), Rod Chiswell (Armidale) and Darrell Parker (North West Australia) who came and spoke about pathways for training to get people thinking about ministry outside of Sydney. So that really put BCA in the conversation. Then we heard about the bursary program for those who wanted to go to the bush and we thought, 'that sounds like us'.

When we first met with Rod Chiswell about potential ministry opportunities, he circled a couple of towns that might be good training places. Lightning Ridge was one of them. I didn't even notice it was circled. Grace said that she saw Rod circle Lightning Ridge and she thought, 'no way'.

As bursary students, we got invited to the BCA Field Staff Conference in 2024 which was really incredible. We got to hear more about opportunities all over Australia and meet a lot of Field Staff. We got to meet Kurt & Bec and they were so lovely. We came

away from the conference thinking quite differently about Lightning Ridge and the opportunity there.

Over the course of the next couple of months, people started to talk to us about the possibility of Lightning Ridge. God was very gracious in slowly growing our heart for ministry there. The more we heard about the opportunities, the town, and the community, it really struck a chord with our hearts. Some people who live in the Ridge are running away from things in their life, some want a quiet life, some are longing for community, or for treasure in opals.

We believe that Lightning Ridge will provide us with a really good opportunity to learn, to be trained up in a difficult place, but a place that might really teach us much about loving and serving Jesus.

We're excited for the next two years; to meet people, to become a part of the community, and to tell people how Jesus can make an impact in their lives.

Samuel Ogg

An encouraging start to 2026!

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field. **Luke 10:2**

Every morning in the BCA National Office the staff team gather for prayer; for our Field Staff, for our work, and for our families. We conclude with one prayer that always has the same request – for more workers for the harvest field in rural, regional and remote Australia. God has provided BCA with a bumper harvest with six Field Staff commencing at the start of this year.

We welcome **Samuel & Grace Ogg, Annette Anderson, Matt & Annika Winter, Rob & Xanthe Yemm, Eion & Claire Simmons** and **Scott & Eilidh Thomson**. BCA will commence supporting the **Nungalinya College co-teaching program** from mid-2026 (see the flyer which was included with this issue) and **Malcolm Reid** is our new StartWell Coordinator.



Samuel & Grace Ogg have a heart for ministry in the bush and are looking forward to completing their ministry training in a rural location, with the goal to continue serving Jesus in the bush long-term. We are excited to continue supporting and partnering with the Oggs as they transition from college students to parish ministry. Read more on pages 8 & 9.

Annette Anderson is the new Anglican Dean at Nungalinya College. Annette is married to Greg who has been the Bishop of the Northern Territory for 11 years. Annette has been a trainer at Nungalinya since 2015, mainly teaching the Certificate II course in English as an additional language.

As Dean of Anglican students, Annette will serve all the remote Aboriginal Anglican parishes in the Northern Territory, facilitating the next generation of church leaders and lay people to travel to Nungalinya, where she will support them during their studies.

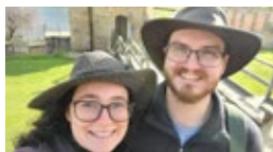




Matt & Annika Winter, together with their children Lucy, Eleanor & Sophie, have moved to Goolwa with the goal of planting a Trinity Church there in the years to come. This church will be a partnership between BCA and the Trinity Network in South Australia.

Matt was the associate pastor at Trinity Church Brighton (Adelaide) from 2020–2025 and a senior staff worker with the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) at the University of South Australia. Matt has commenced ministry at Trinity Church Victor Harbor from which the church plant in Goolwa will be established.

You can read more about the next group of new starters in **Post & Rails** on Pages 24–26:



Rob & Xanthe Yemm who have just completed their ministry studies at SMBC are serving as Ministers in Training at the Bathurst Cathedral for the next two years.



Eion & Claire Simmons, who have lived in Port Hedland since 2021, are now being supported by BCA. They have five kids: Ngaire, Josiah, Hayley, Caleb and Aurora.



Scott & Eilidh Thomson together with their children Anna & James, will commence in the Parish of Augusta & Margaret River after Easter 2026.



From the middle of 2026, BCA will support Nungalinga College so they can employ **Indigenous co-teachers**.



Malcolm Reid is coordinating and establishing a new BCA initiative known as StartWell to help our Field Staff start well in their ministry and life in the bush.

Please join with us in giving thanks to the Lord of the harvest for sending more workers out into His harvest field. May they produce a crop a hundred, sixty or thirty times what they sow (Matthew 13:8).



Why do we do what we do?

Why would a young couple move from the leafy suburb of Mosman on Sydney's lower north shore to the bush, even to Cobar? Why would a young family relocate from the relative comfort of Darwin to Alice Springs, or from busy, comfortable, family friendly Sydney suburban life to the isolation of Norfolk Island – all to serve the Gospel of Jesus?

I think that there are four imperatives that flow from the Gospel of Jesus that shape BCA Field Staff thinking on why they serve as they do. In fact, I believe these four imperatives are for all of us who know and love the Lord Jesus.

First of all, the entire purpose of this world continues to be fulfilled as the Good News of Jesus is proclaimed.

One of John's gospel's most striking features is that John places the events of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus into a cosmic framework – an 'all of history framework', beginning all the way back with creation (John 1:1–3).

I think that by beginning his gospel in this way, John was tying both God's creative **activity** and His **creation purposes** to the person of

the Son, Jesus.

What were those creation purposes? In summary, Genesis 1 and 2 show us God's purpose in creation is pre-eminently to create a people for Himself. And as John's gospel begins, what we find revealed to us is that God's creation purposes, God's creation of a people for Himself, is a story that continues to this very day as the Good News of Jesus is proclaimed and as men and women, boys and girls turn to Him in faith and repentance (John 1:12–13).

Second, God is a God whose love demands Christians share the Good News of Jesus.

We are very familiar with John 3:16 and we very often understand it to declare the magnitude of God's love



FAR LEFT:
Alice Springs
Church Camp

TOP RIGHT:
Toph Hallyburton
leads Kids' Church
in Alice Springs

BOTTOM RIGHT:
BCA Nomads Greg
& Liz Grosser went
outreach visiting
with James
Daymond in Cobar

– a love **so great** it sent Jesus to His death for us. Yet it is also very much to be understood as an explanation of the manner, or **the way** in which God loved His world.

The way God loved His world was that by Jesus' death God satisfied His own justice – in the person of the Son, God took the penalty that our rebellion against Him deserved, upon Himself. At the cross what we see is the perfect love of God so intersect with the perfect justice of God, that God's justice is satisfied, and the relationship broken by human rebellion is now restored – all by the death of the Son (Romans 5:6–11).

How could we not want to share the beyond incredibly good news that those once condemned because of rebellion against God are saved by the death of Jesus?

Third, the seriousness of life demands we share the Good News of Jesus.

Although God created a world He

continued next page...



The Hallyburtons moved from Darwin to Alice Springs



The Daymonds moved from Mosman to Narromine, Mudgee and now serve in Cobar



Former US Ambassador Caroline Kennedy speaks at the Thanksgiving Day Service on Norfolk Island

Himself described as 'very good' for most of human history the world has been a place where our rebellion against God has made it a place of darkness where our own death is the ultimate penalty (Genesis 1:31; Romans 3:23; John 3:19; Romans 6:23).

Worst of all, there can be **no** human solution to the human problem, because at the very heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

The Good News of the Gospel is that it is 'Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.' (1Thessalonians 1:10).

Fourth, the nature of the Christian gospel demands we share it.

The Gospel is **exactly** what the people of our world need to hear. While there are all sorts of religions in this world, the Gospel of Jesus is unique for in His Gospel we discover that it is God **alone** working in His world to save us when we are helpless to save ourselves (John 1:12-13).

Won't you join in partnership with us as we at Bush Church Aid strive to go the distance for His Gospel's sake? The purpose of the world, the love of God, the seriousness of life and the nature of the gospel all demand we do.

Ted Brush

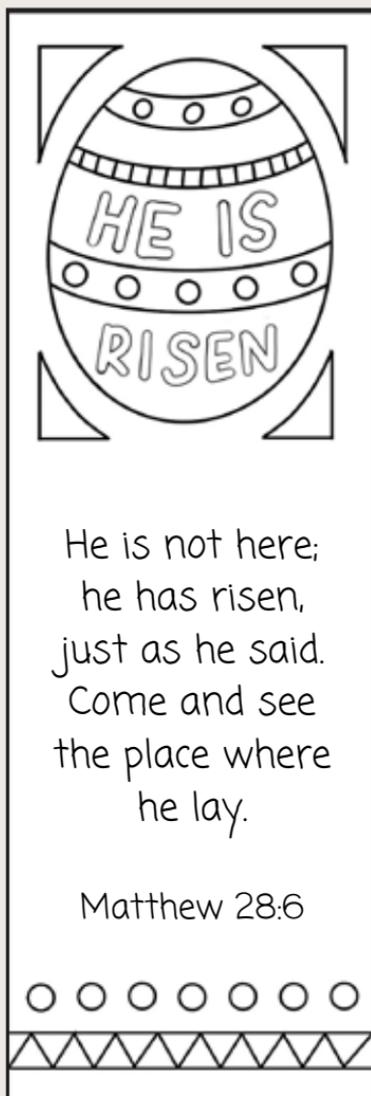
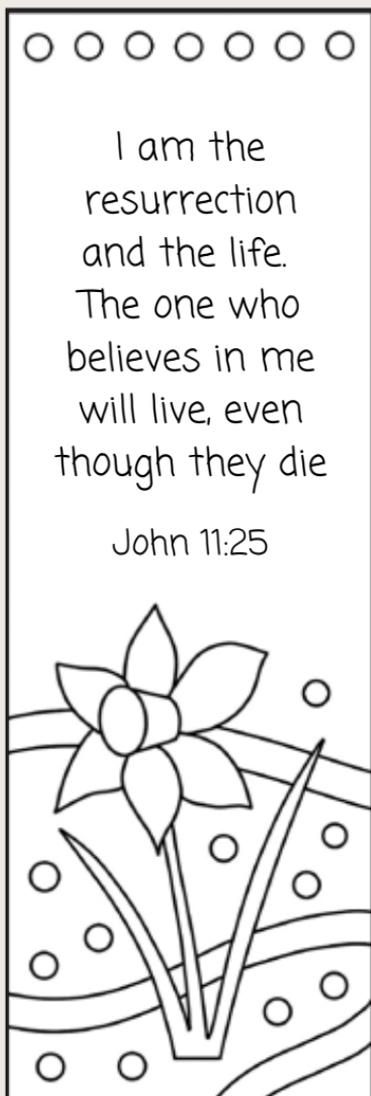
BCA Fundraising & Marketing Officer



The Carletons moved from Sydney to Norfolk Island

COLOURING FUN!

Colour then cut-out these bookmarks





WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY LEGACY

Recently I was researching my family tree, which is one of the things I love to do most. Reading back through old history and imagining what members of my family's lives must have been like, what led them to the decisions they made and where they lived.

I wonder if you have ever looked into yours? What stories can you tell about your ancestors, where they lived, where they worked, what challenges they may have faced?

In one of my recent studies, I discovered a bit more about my fifth Great Grandfather. He came out to Australia from England and was a vital part of establishing Australia's oldest church in 1809, Ebenezer church in Pitt Town NSW (see above).

While of course history is complicated and full of both good and bad stories; things that you might feel grateful for and things that might be confusing or even

upsetting. I couldn't help but wonder what he might have prayed for as he started this church, what he might have hoped for and how he might have been a part of sharing Jesus in his community.

The word Ebenezer means "The Lord has helped us all the way" or "Stone of Help."

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12 NIV

I wondered about the stories of our family and how they influence us today. For a man in my family



cy?

who was so invested in sharing the word of God to Australia, how can I be a part of that story today? How can I participate in building and loving the church of this nation? How can I continue that part of his story?

Even without knowing that story, I know I am part of the biggest story over history of Jesus building His church throughout the world. The story of countless men and women before me who have heard the good news and shared it right where they are, with what is in their hands, as part of the family of Jesus. I wonder what story we will tell in our lives as we point people to Jesus right where we are, with what is in our hands.

Rachel Dirks

bca 4kids
bush church aid

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

MARCH

Hamish C	Archer C
Harriet P	Alexandra B
Phoebe K	Charlotte D
Willem K	Oliver A
Abel K	Paige C
Evelyn W	Arlo A
Judah T	Matthew H
Henry G	Joel G
Zayden P	George G
Rafael Mc	Abigail S
Lucy O	Olive B
Rose K	Jackson C
Jasper G	

APRIL

Lara T	Miriam G
Archie N	Willow G
Caleb R	Lou A
Jake T	Phoebe H
Evan S	Harris M
Charlie N	Eliza K
Ruby G	

MAY

Gus T	Matilda O
Elka H	Reginald M
Posy H	Riley C
Lenny H	Louis B
Theodore N	Poppy S
Ella G	

I WANT TO BE A MEMBER OF



If you are in pre-school or primary school and would like to join BCA 4 Kids, ask your parents to fill out the form below and return to:

BCA 4 KIDS
GPO Box 5389
Sydney NSW 2001

OR

Email your info to:
BCA4Kids@bushchurchaid.com.au

Every member receives a welcome letter, a welcome certificate, a drink bottle and a copy of our BCA 4 Kids magazine!



Name _____

Parent/Caregiver _____

Age _____ Birthday _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ Boy or Girl _____

What church do you go to? _____



BCA MONEY BOXES

Kids give great support to BCA, and every dollar you put in the box is a dollar which goes to help tell people about Jesus. Thanks to our wonderful young supporters!



Around the country



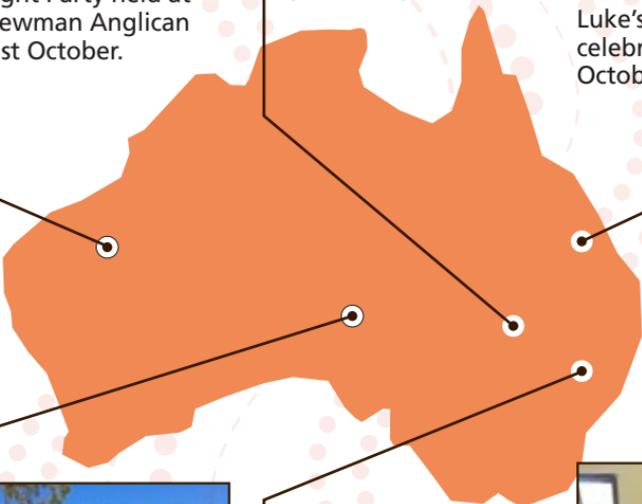
NEWMAN WA:
Around 40 kids came to the annual Light Party held at Newman Anglican last October.



BOURKE, NSW:
Last year, George Ferguson was officially presented with a police uniform for his role as police chaplain.



EMERALD, QLD:
Many connections and re-connections were made as St Luke's Day was celebrated in October last year.



COOBER PEDY, SA:
Last November, for the second year in a row, a mission team from Southern Vales Christian College spent a week with the Woods.



KELSO, NSW:
A team from St Thomas' North Sydney travelled to Kelso to help out at the Bicentenary Spring Fair last October.



NORFOLK ISLAND:
The St Barnabas chapel grounds came alive last September at the annual Spring Fair. Olivia & Claudia Carleton ran a stall full of delicious treats.



After serving with BCA in Kununurra since 2017, we bid farewell to the Faricy family at the end of last year. While grateful for their time in Kununurra and with BCA, saying goodbye was full of mixed emotions...

A big part of our last three months in Kununurra was preparing ourselves and our church for our departure.

Our last Sunday in Kununurra was Sunday 14 December. When you have been serving alongside people for over eight years, saying goodbye is hard.

We're very thankful for all that God has done in and through St James in our time there. God is good and God is faithful!

We will genuinely miss our church in Kununurra. At the same time, we're excited about what good works God has prepared in advance for us to do at the Cathedral in Rockhampton.

Our leaving also marked the end of our time as BCA Field Staff. A special thank you to those who have been praying for St James and for us. When we started, we remember

Greg Bridge telling us that writing newsletters and prayer points is a ministry to those who are devoted to prayer. I found the opposite is also true. That is, as you prayed, sent us emails or called us, you were ministering to us and with us as we sought to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have now joined you as BCA pray-ers and supporters.

Leaving brought on a roller coaster of emotions: sadness about leaving; excitement about what was to come; and at the time thinking about the many logistical things to organise – like driving to Wollongong for family Christmas before heading up to Rockhampton in January. A short 70 hours of driving. We downloaded audiobooks and podcasts! The grandparents bought activity books. (We arrived safe and sound in Rockhampton on 13 January). Kununurra will always have a special



FAR LEFT:
Final family photo
in Kununurra

TOP RIGHT:
Community Carols
with Bec and
Butternut

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Daniel baptises James
in the Ord River

place in our minds – our youngest, Emily, was born there (she is now almost seven!).

In Term 4 at church we went through 1 Peter which reminds us that our home is not this side of Jesus' return, but we have an eternal home waiting for us, guaranteed by Jesus' resurrection. 1 Peter 1:3-4,

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade." That's the ultimate home that we long for.

Daniel Faricy

THE ANGELS REJOICED!

I had the privilege of discipling and baptising James, one of the new Christians in the Kununurra church. We had been meeting each week, looking at a different part of God's Word and thinking about what it meant to live as a disciple of Christ. The baptism itself was an encouragement, and James shared the public declaration of his faith and his testimony before the church at the Ord River. We, like the angels in heaven, rejoiced at the new life that will now be in heaven with us.

OUR LAST CAROLS

In early December I gave my ninth and final Carols talk at the Combined Churches Community Carols. So many people from the community came and heard about how Jesus is the King we should worship. Butternut our puppet made an appearance too. One comment from a regular was that during the talk people were engaged and weren't rolling their eyes – an answer to prayer.



How can I leave a place I love?

How can I leave a place I love? A place that has been the location of incredible experiences, learning, friendships, challenges, beauty, opportunity and so many partnerships?

We've been living in Mallacoota for almost eight years. For Andy this has meant working as a Fisheries Officer, for myself the role of Priest-in-Charge of the Cooperating Parish of Croajingolong. I became the longest serving incumbent in the Parish's 100-year history.

Why stay so long in this small, beautiful, isolated and challenging location; in a parish that has a congregation that rises and falls in number like the tide; where it takes an hour to drive to the secondary centre; and where there are no other

churches so the minister must cater for a diversity of denominations, theology and expectations?

We stayed for love, joy, partnership, and carrying on a good work until it felt our tasks here were 'complete'.

We've been here through the bushfire; an experience that has shaped me and my ministry in a way that is yet to be fully recognised. We've been part of a community where the boundary between church and community is blurry. Where many see me as their 'Community Priest' even if they've never attended



The crew from the OpShop



Jude with the team from Theos



FAR LEFT:
Jude & Andy
celebrate buying
their house in
Mallacoota

TOP RIGHT:
Jude interviewing
one of the Theos
team members
during the Christmas
holidays in 2025

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Crowd at the
50th anniversary
celebrations of St
Peter's Mallacoota

church. I was voted onto MADRA (Mallacoota and District Recovery Association), starred in an ABC TV documentary, been the community rep on the school board, the Police chaplain, presented a weekly radio show, led the annual community Christmas Carols, and spent time each summer with Scripture Union Family Mission and Theos teams.

These are the stories that feature in articles from *The Real Australian*, Gippsland Anglican and other publications. While they have been incredible opportunities, what's kept me here is the partnership with the people. The radio listener who asked for a Bible. The regular Opshop customer who invited me to meet her dying partner and then take the funeral, because "you will show her respect and that's important". The stressed-out Mum who wants to talk about her teenager. The congregation who now ask, "I wonder?" as we approach the Scriptures, who accept each other's differences, and who have both laughed and cried together through fire, COVID, and all that life has sent our way.

We began here in 2018, our partnership with BCA began in 2020. For six years we have been blessed with this partnership, a reminder that even when Mallacoota seems so isolated, we are part of a much larger body of Christ around Australia. We have been blessed financially, making the church braver and bolder in activities and mission ideas for the Kingdom of God. We have been blessed through prayer support, monthly encouragement through phone calls, emails, even regular cards and letters – these have been appreciated, even if I'm not always good at replying. Andy & I have been blessed with the Field Staff Conferences, and with meeting colleagues from around Australia who are also ministering in rural, regional and remote places.

So how do we leave a place we love? We leave with grief because change is hard, but we also leave knowing that the Parish is not ours. These are God's people, and God who began a good work over 100 years ago will continue it on to its full completion.

continued next page...



Jude dressed as the Star of Christmas for the Mallacoota Community Carols



Jude enjoyed a pilgrimage walk with members of St Peter's

We leave with joy because of all that has been done. We leave with prayer that I will be able to use the experiences of fire and recovery to help others in their ministries when facing difficulty. We leave with hope that one day we'll be back – in the house we own, in the garden we've established. But for now, our task is to entrust the Parish to God, and ourselves to new chapters.

But we do ask for your ongoing prayers for the Parish, for the community, for a new Priest to come and for us as we begin again elsewhere. *"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel."* Philippians 1:27

Jude Benton

Post & Rails

WELCOME



Rob & Xanthe Yemm are heading to the Bathurst Cathedral for two years to be trained for ministry. Originally from New Zealand, Rob completed a three-year ministry apprenticeship in Christchurch before moving to Australia to study theology at SMBC. A BCA child herself, Xanthe spent her very early years in the Diocese of North West Australia before growing up on the east coast and completing a Master of Divinity at SMBC. They previously attended and served at St Alban's Belmore, where Xanthe was an assistant minister.



Eion & Claire Simmons, along with their children Ngairé, Josiah, Hayley, Caleb and Aurora, have lived in Port Hedland in the Diocese of North West Australia since 2021, where Eion serves as the Minister in Charge. Both Eion & Claire grew up in Western Australia and have served in ministry at the Geraldton Cathedral, in Broome, and with the Seafarer's Centre. Port Hedland is not a new place for BCA – we partnered with the parish from the 1960s to 2020 and are excited to commence supporting the Simmons family.

WELCOME



Malcolm Reid is coordinating and establishing a new BCA initiative known as StartWell. Our Field Staff, who go the distance to serve in rural, regional, and remote Australia, face various challenges – challenges that are often unique to rural ministry. Malcom and his wife Leanne served with BCA as Field Staff from 1998–2001 in Port Hedland and Newman. They most recently spent 10 years with CMS in Vietnam.



BCA is returning to the Diocese of Bunbury in Western Australia where we last served in the 1950s. After Easter 2026, **Scott & Eilidh Thomson** together with their children Anna & James, will serve in the Parish of Augusta & Margaret River. This is a return home for Scott who grew up in Margaret River and first heard about Jesus there. "I believe that my family and I can help BCA bring the Gospel to the smaller towns of WA as we have the background and skills to minister in smaller towns."



In other exciting news, from the middle of 2026, BCA will support Nungalinga College so they can employ **Indigenous co-teachers**. BCA's support means that five or six Indigenous trainers will come in for four to five weeks of teaching per block. Annually, approximately 30 Indigenous trainers will work as co-teachers alongside other qualified teachers. You can read more about this program in the flyer which was part of this issue of *The Real Australian*.

FAREWELL



Jude & Andy Benton are moving to South Australia where Jude has been appointed as Coordinator of Discernment and Formation in the Diocese of Adelaide. This appointment grows out of Jude's ministry experience and further study, particularly her interest in equipping and supporting clergy for the realities of ministry, including times of community crisis. Jude's ministry to her parish and the wider community in the aftermath of Black Summer and during COVID was profound.

Post & Rails

VALE



Don Miller
(6 February 1949 – October 2025) served with BCA in the Parish of the North Eastern Goldfields in the Diocese of North West

Australia from 1982–1988. During his time in Leinster and later in Wiluna he felt called to minister to the Mardu people (some of the last of Australia's Indigenous people to make contact with European Australians) and became cherished among the First Nations people he worked with. He bought Ullalla Station and hundreds of First Nations People stayed and worked on the property.



Ronald (Ron) Robins (26 June 1936 – 28 November 2025) served with BCA in Zeehan, Tasmania (1975–1976) and Derby,

WA (1977–1979) together with wife Ann and their four children Cindy, Karen, Cheryl and Andrew. BCA always remained close to his heart, "Being a BCA Missioner at Zeehan in Tasmania and at Derby-Broome in Western Australia broadened my idea of the work of a priest and gave me experiences which I could never have had in a city ministry. I praise God for the privilege that has been mine."



Pamela (Pam) Goodhew (7 March 1935 – 15 November 2025) together with husband Harry (former Archbishop of Sydney) and their children

served with BCA in Ceduna from 1963–1966. Youngest son Philip was born in Ceduna. Stories of plagues, of spiders and mice, dust storms and snakes were told by them at Pam's funeral service. When they returned to Sydney, the children were considered 'wild and uncouth' as they were used to certain freedoms in the bush. Pam leaves behind Harry, children Robyn, David, Wendy, Philip and their families.



May Puttman nee Morrow (17 October 1948 – 9 December 2025) served with BCA as a hostel supervisor at Broken Hill

Hostel from 1986–1988 and then alongside late husband Nick as the assistant until 1990. She met and then married Nick after he came to Broken Hill in 1988 to work as the hostel assistant. Their marriage service was conducted by then Federal Secretary Ernie Carnaby and a reading done by then NSW State Secretary Brian Roberts. May leaves behind children Robert, Faith and their families.

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From the Archives

– A Lot of Water

Much has been printed in newspapers, and a lot has been said over the radio about the floods on the Darling from the Darling Downs in Queensland to where the river joins the Murray at Wentworth.

The Flood has been with us now for seven months. Here in Wilcannia, it is nine miles wide and has been so for that time, and at the time of writing we shall have it for another month.

It is very inconvenient to say the least. It has disrupted communications with the people on the eastern side of the river with consequent disruptions of parish visiting by patrols and virtual discontinuance of church services in Ivanhoe.

Recently a young man rang me from Ivanhoe and asked me if I would come down and marry him. Ivanhoe is 120 miles by road. In normal times it is quite easily reached in about three hours. However, the Flood was with us. He was not very keen on being married by the local policeman and I was the only Minister who could reach him, and that with difficulty.

I could fly, but then no one else would have been visited. So, I rang

a parishioner 65 miles out on the Cobar Road and asked him if I could borrow a jeep for a couple of days.

The day arrived for our departure, as my wife decided she would also go. We soon found out that the jeep did not have any brakes. We were not left in any doubt either that they are very rough to travel in over long distances. As we had very considerable rain over the past six months, the road was terrible, to say the least. We were very glad of the four-wheel drive.

We arrived at Mrs Whitchurch's right on dark (after two stops to visit people on the way). She was out, so we sat in the jeep for a few minutes until someone came and asked if I could pull a car out of a bog, right in the middle of the town. Ivanhoe was just one big quagmire we found, and I repeated the pulling out twice in the next couple of hours.

Our hostess arrived and we made ready for Church after tea. The



LEFT:
Darling River
at Wilcannia

mud was not at all likely to let many people venture out after dark and we found only a handful of people there. We were all glad of the opportunity to gather and worship God and give thanks for the bountiful season which we were now enjoying. The Church is small, but always there is a sense of fellowship when we sing and pray together.

Later that evening arrangements were completed for the wedding and many friends of the young couple worked late into the night to get the Church ready.

Next morning we awoke to bright sunshine. The Church was crowded with relatives and friends. Everyone was literally crammed in, like a peak hour tram in Sydney. The young couple were glad that we came, as I was also, and they started their marriage with the blessing of God.

The jeep was made ready and our last job of pulling a truck out of a bog in the main street was performed.

We were glad that we were able to go to Ivanhoe to share with some of the people the things that belong to God and to tell of the Gospel of Christ. We were also glad of the experience of what some people have to do to help others, and in that way get to know their problems and so reach into their hearts.



*The Revd
John Stockdale*

Field Staff
1953–1961

This excerpt comes from the March 1957 issue of The Real Australian. All issues of The Real Australian from 1920 to today can be found on our website: bushchurchaid.com.au/archive

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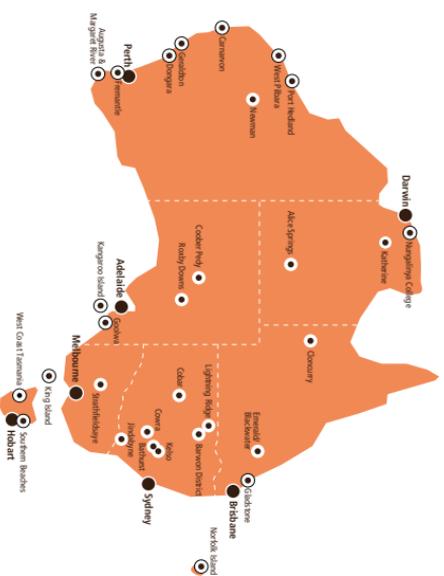
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