

The Real Australian



Ensure
distance
doesn't win

4

Sharing the
Good News
with great joy

8

Exciting
things
happening in
Roxby Downs

12

BCA Directory

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Front Cover: The Trinity
Adelaide mission team
enjoyed a bush dinner during
their trip to Roxby Downs

Playing the long game

You will probably not be surprised that leading BCA is a journey that requires patience. It can literally take years to build the relationship needed for new partnerships. Similarly, as we try and work towards being better stewards of all that God has provided, it rarely happens overnight.

Now my natural tendency is to see things happen 'today' and preferably 'yesterday'. But through many lived experiences I have learned to play the long game. Keep the vision clear, take the next faithful step, and don't stop praying.

But here's the thing – when I reflect on that, I realise I'm just following the example of someone who has been playing the long game far longer than any of us.

The apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 1:9 that God "saved us and called us to a holy life ... This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time.**" Now that is playing the long game! God's plan unfolded across millennia of history through promises made and kept and finding their "yes" in Jesus! God is, without question, the ultimate player of the long game.

And we see that same patient, purposeful work on display in this edition of *The Real Australian*. Earlier this year I remember reading the story of a previous minister in Katherine who prayed faithfully for young people to come to faith. In time he left that parish without seeing it happen. Years passed. And then those prayers were answered as a new generation began turning up at the church in Katherine. Nobody planned that timing. Nobody

engineered it. God simply, in His own unhurried way, made it grow.

Another example of the long game are your prayers and generosity. Every dollar given and every prayer offered, is a seed planted in the soil of God's long game. You may see the fruit. However, like the minister in Katherine, it may be the next generation that reads of how God used your prayers and generosity. Either way, the God who purposed our salvation before time began is the same God who tends every prayer and every act of faithful giving – in His own timing, in His own surprising ways.

So, let's keep going the distance in the long game of our prayers and generosity. Because if there's one thing the story of Scripture, the story of BCA, and the story of Katherine all tell us, it's this: In God's wisdom He has a timetable and He never wastes a thing.



Greg Harris
National Director



KATHERINE

Ensure distance doesn't

Go the distance with us, taking the Gospel of Jesus to the bush

In many places across our vast land, there are thousands of people who do not know anything of the Jesus we worship.

In the bush, distance puts a lot of things just out of reach. Schools shut. Hospitals are hours away. The services city folk take for granted often disappear from bush towns. And when hard seasons hit, people face them alone. It's a pattern seen over and over...

Organisations pull out of the bush because the distance is hard, the economics don't work, the isolation is real. Over time, whole communities are left without essential services. But the deepest cost is spiritual.

BCA doesn't go where it's easy. And because of committed partners like you, for over 100 years we've gone the distance – sending Field Staff into communities others have given up on. Sharing Jesus with the bush, so the lost are found, disciples are made, and His church grows.

We have launched our mid-year appeal to help meet a \$415,000

funding need to ensure this continues to happen for more rural, regional and remote communities.

It happened recently in Katherine.

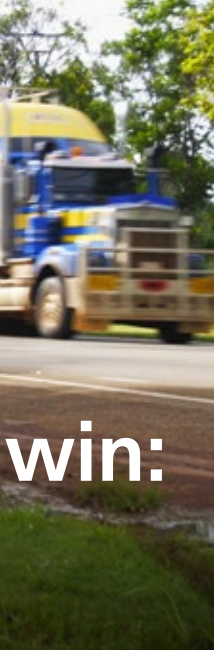
Ash is a music teacher who moved to Katherine not knowing anyone, and she had a really tough first six months there.

But Ash had been drawn to Jesus across her life – through story, through His Word, through music and finally through the community of Katherine Anglican Church.

Ash didn't grow up in a Christian household and describes picking up a small copy of the New Testament and Psalms she found in the back of her mum's cupboard at age 12 or 13. No one handed it to her. No one explained it. She says, "No teacher, no church, no context, no idea. But I read it. Cover to cover."

Ash joined Katherine Anglican Church and found community, but the church

win:



FAR LEFT:
Katherine,
Northern Territory

TOP RIGHT:
The O'Keeffes
with some of their
Thursday evening
Connect Group

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Katherine Anglican
Church

was without a shepherd. When BCA Field Staff Pat & Issy O'Keeffe arrived, everything changed. Ash describes it this way... "Pat & Issy, when you guys came, things exploded in the best way. Prayer meetings, Bible study, family lunches... our community is truly thriving".

Pat & Issy built community and sat alongside people in hard seasons. They created the kind of embodied, present church that turned years of private faith into something shared and real.

This is how Ash describes what happened in her life, "Moving to Katherine is the single best thing that's ever happened to me, because it led me to Jesus. I had been reading the Bible and praying for 10 years but it was only because God brought me here that I have not just heard the

Word but received it, and it has taken root in me."

For ten years, God was running after Ash and He used BCA Field Staff and the faithful generosity of partners like you to reach her.

This story is still being written – in Katherine, and in communities right across rural, regional and remote Australia. But for every community with a Gospel worker, there are still others without.

Your partnership and commitment to this Gospel work has been instrumental in making stories like Ash's and so many others possible.

And today we invite you to prayerfully consider the role you can play in making stories like Ash's possible for others, so every person in the bush has every chance to know Jesus.



You can donate to our mid-year appeal at
bushchurcaid.com.au/sharejesuswiththebush/ra



An incredible week of mission in Coober Pedy

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord! These are the only words we have to describe how God worked through the SMBC mission team who came to the Catacomb Church from 21–29 March 2026.

SMBC was where we studied from 2021 to 2023. We remember how mission would happen each year – you could choose a place you were interested in and put your hand up to go. So fast forward to 2025, and after two years of ministry here, we thought we would see if we could entice a group of students to come and take part in remote desert ministry. Here are some highlights from the week...

After the first Sunday church service with the team, we went around the corner to join the Brethren Aboriginal Church in Coober Pedy where William Lennon gave a message and shared lunch with us. We asked William many questions about the gospel approach to Aboriginal communities and the struggles that he sees. We also dropped in to Umoona Aboriginal community to clean up the new café

after its official opening. Umoona were understandably blown away by this act of kindness and love from the team.

Sport is a big thing in this town, as there is basically none played. So Catacomb Church advertised that there would be two basketball afternoons during the mission trip. The number of students and parents who turned up was incredible. How faithful is our God! Almost all of the senior students from the school turned up and we had an impactful two hours hanging, talking, and competing with them.

One evening we had a barbecue and free movie event at the Drive-in. Coober Pedy has SA's last Drive-in and we are part of the committee. So, we pitched the idea of hiring out the Drive-in to play the Christian animated movie 'David'. The turnout was bigger than expected



FAR LEFT:
The mission team at the Pink Roadhouse in Oodnadatta

TOP RIGHT:
Puppet show in the Catacomb Church

BOTTOM RIGHT:
The mission team ran two basketball afternoons

and a Christian school group from Melbourne were in town so they joined in too. BCA SA/NT Regional Officer John Warner gave a talk before the movie was played. To have the story of God played on the big screen in a public space in town had us so thankful to God for making things happen.

We planned to travel to Oodnadatta with the group, but the roads had been closed due to heavy rains. Prayer was sought through the BCA and SMBC prayer network. God worked through a number of people to make this visit happen including a local Aboriginal Christian whose uncle was the grader driver who worked on the road so it could be opened! We travelled in convoy to Oodnadatta and the drive was incredible; the desert had been transformed into a carpet of green! We stopped at 'Oods' for lunch at the Pink Roadhouse, then visited the Aboriginal school where the team performed a puppet show. The connections made were invaluable and we hope to visit again and

perhaps be part of the school in the future. The team also met with Maxine who is the second pastor at the Uniting Church and the story of how they met outdoors for 20 years before the church building was constructed humbled us incredibly. We left with a sense of God working in this remote settlement which numbers just 80 people.

On their final day in Coober Pedy, the team led and ran our church service. The singing was all live, the sermon was spot on, and the fellowship was a blessing. We had seven new locals attend! The Holy Spirit moved within our fellowship in a powerful way.

When we waved off the team our hearts were full but also heavy. The work the team did for the Kingdom of God was beyond what we can do, but we know God has His plans for what will come from this mission.

Please pray for the SMBC students as they spend this season of their lives being formed and filled with God's Word.

Dave & Margie Wood



Sharing the Good News with great joy

'For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.' Romans 1:16

In January we celebrated one year in Gladstone, and we have been so encouraged by all that God has done so far.

Our Christmas services were a time of sharing 'good news of great joy' across our community. After several years of changes and uncertainty,

our focus was to maximise our opportunities for outreach and connection. We held family Carols services in Clinton and Calliope, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services, and a Christmas Day Soup Kitchen lunch. It was a privilege to share the Good News of Jesus' birth with nearly 250 people across our services, and 60 plus diners at our Soup Kitchen Christmas lunch.

This year we've focused on consolidating the rhythms of ministry and outreach. Our Bible study groups have grown in both number of groups and people attending. It's always a joy to break open God's Word with faithful disciples and people taking steps towards Jesus. Our Lenten series 'No Turning Back' was a deep dive into our baptismal vows. It proved to be a time of both encouragement and challenge as we looked towards the cross.



Our Alpha weekend



VS



FAR LEFT:
David and a friend
at the Op Shop

TOP RIGHT:
The Brownes

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Christmas Day
service

Sundays at Church have been joyful, with new people coming to investigate Jesus. We've had new volunteers stepping up to help with music and Kids' Church, which has brought our community much closer together.

Gladstone is a very transient place, and it's been sad to see some loved members of our church move elsewhere, and yet God has continued bringing new people into our midst. It's been great to see established members of our church welcoming new people and seeing the body of Christ work together.

Ray's Soup Kitchen and our 'This N That' Op Shop continue to be a great space for outreach. People often come to the Soup Kitchen looking for food but also meet people who are ready to listen and pray for them. Likewise the Op Shop often welcomes people looking for a chat who find community and the love of Jesus at the shop counter. This year we also launched an Alpha course with a group of 12 people coming along to

the Calliope Union Church, a centre that ceased services some years ago. It was great to use this space again for ministry and we're hoping to launch a regular service off the back of Alpha.

We recently had our second Easter in Gladstone. It's a wonderful time when the weather gets cooler and people visit for the Harbour Festival. In the lead up to Easter Sunday, we held a Maundy Thursday community meal and service, and then Good Friday services at Gladstone & Clinton churches, as well as Easter Sunday services in Gladstone, Clinton, and Calliope. Our theme this year was 'Death Defeated' where we focused on how Jesus conquered death on the cross and rose to eternal life for us three days later.

Please pray with us for those investigating Jesus, our outreach through Ray's Soup Kitchen and Op Shop. Please also pray that we can launch a regular service in Calliope.

David & Zoë Browne



Amazing answers to prayer in Cowra

We are delighted to share that we saw some amazing answers to prayer earlier this year through the Cowra Summer Breakout program, with many connections made with non-churched people.

The Cowra Summer Breakout (CSB) held in the January school holidays, is for school aged kids and teens. Adults don't miss out though, with some evening events held for them, as well as a coffee cart run every morning during the kids and teens program.

CSB is made possible because of a large number of people from different churches across Sydney who give of their time to come to Cowra and run this program. It has an almost 30 year history, but 2026 was the first time that the Anglican Church was officially involved. Previously the Baptist

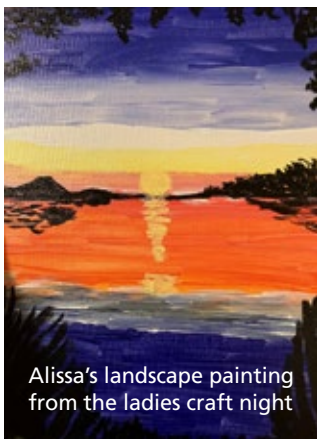
and Presbyterian churches have run this program on their own.

CSB includes a daily program of games, songs, drama and craft where the young people learn about Jesus in their age groups.

This year the program ran on

Monday to Friday mornings, with a special family-friendly trivia event held on the Saturday night, and a combined Sunday morning service to conclude. The theme of CSB this year was The Narrow Road (Matthew 7:13-14).

This year's program was a great success. Total registrations across the week



Alissa's landscape painting from the ladies craft night



FAR LEFT:
Combined Service
after the CSB

TOP RIGHT:
Vivienne
performing at the
combined service

BOTTOM RIGHT:
The Connellys

for kids and teens was 90.

Over 80 women attended the Tuesday evening ladies' craft night, where landscape paintings were completed (see previous page) whilst a member of the Breakout team shared their testimony.

Sixty men attended the men's meat night and the family trivia night was attended by over 120 adults (not including kids)!

The kids and youth performed songs at the combined church service, and parents of children who do not regularly attend church came to see their children perform. For the first time an introduction to Jesus course was successfully run following the program, with four weeks of study in the Gospel of John.

CSB was also a great success for St John's. All the irregularly attending families at St John's sent their kids along to the program, and they all had a fantastic week. Our Vivienne was also able to attend for the first time. Having young adults invest

in the lives of these kids is such a blessing, and something that is treasured by kids and parents alike.

We were also pleased to see many of our congregants at the combined Sunday service at the Baptist church following the week-long program. Ben preached at this service, and one of our parishioners commented that she thought that it was Ben's "best sermon yet". This parishioner was not only greatly encouraged by the message, but also the number of voices singing together in worship that day. She was also pleased that her grandchildren who attended CSB had gotten so much out of it.

Members of all the churches were also greatly encouraged by conversations with visiting team members, opportunities to hear testimonies, and opportunities to join in praying for Cowra. We look forward to being part of Cowra Summer Breakout again next year!

Ben & Alissa Connelly



Exciting things happening in Roxby Downs

New Christians growing in their faith, locals starting to investigate Jesus for the first time and children excited about coming to our holiday kids programs each year are just some of the encouraging things that have been happening in Roxby Downs. We're excited to share some of these things with you...

We've had a mission team come from Trinity Adelaide in the September/October school holidays for the past five years. The youth run a kids program with the support of the adults who devise and write the program.

There are some really exciting things coming out of mission... There's a family who first connected with us during COVID. We'd decided that we didn't want to wear face masks and be inside church and try to sing. So we held our services in the church car park. And this family live across the road. At that time the kids were asking, "Dad, what's all this about?" Then these kids started coming to the school holiday program and have come every year since. Not only did they come last year but their mum chased Beth up, and asked,

"When are you putting dates out for the kids' program? Because I've got my child's therapist trying to make appointments and I'm going to be in so much trouble if I make a therapy appointment during kids' program time." So she scheduled her kids' therapy appointment around mission. And they're a non-Christian family! On Christmas Eve last year, the whole family came to church for the first time ever! We can see how that drip feeding has gone from intrigue, to coming to the kids' programs, to 'we must come to the kids' programs', to coming to church! They're not regulars yet but praise God they came!

The theme of the last holiday mission was *Follow the Clues*. We had the coffee machine on each morning for parents. It was a



FAR LEFT:
Mission bush dinner

TOP RIGHT:
Mission kids
program

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Worship during
the bush dinner

deliberate choice on our part not to ask the mission team to make and serve the coffee as we are the ones who will have ongoing conversations and look to build relationships.

On the last day of mission we finished at lunchtime with a sausage sizzle, and parents and siblings were invited to come along. The kids showed their parents what they had learned over the week and Glen did a five-minute gospel presentation based on what the kids had learned. So, it was structured so the parents heard that message as well.

One thing that we did a bit differently last year, which seemed to work really well, was each evening, we invited people from our church community to share with the mission team about what it's like to be a Christian in a remote place. Viliame and Saniyya were two of those who shared.

Viliame is applying for a humanitarian visa following the coup in Fiji. He worked in the government and had to leave for his safety. He has four children and a wife back in

Fiji, and he can't return. Viliame is working in the mine to try and earn enough money to support himself and his family. He shared with the team some of the ways that he's had to really lean on God and trust through that hardship.

Saniyya told the kids how she had grown up in a Christian family but had drifted away and made some bad life choices. We were worried that this might have been a bit much. Dave, the minister from Trinity who came up with the team, thought it was really good for the kids to hear that we don't all have a linear path from being good church kids to being an adult Christian. And also good for them to see that their friends who have fallen away can come back and be welcomed. It went so well that we are going to do it again this year!

Please pray for the 2026 mission team's preparation plus the relationships we continue to foster with those who are yet to be in relationship with Jesus.

Glen & Beth McDonald



The road back to BCA

The road back to BCA has been long and winding. It began with four formative years in the Pilbara – first in Port Hedland and then Newman – serving with our young family. Alongside the beauty of Karijini, I also witnessed the trauma of Cyclone Vance in Exmouth, where I served as an SES volunteer.

Arriving in Hedland and Newman was exciting, but that enthusiasm was soon tempered by the realisation that I didn't know how to minister well in this context. I relied heavily on what I had inherited from the Sydney Diocese, grateful for its theological strength but largely blind to the particular cultural, social and economic realities of mining towns. I encountered transient workers, Indigenous displacement, and patterns of life far outside my experience. I wanted to care for people and share the hope of the Gospel but often felt inadequate.

That season was followed by almost ten years serving with CMS in Hanoi, Vietnam. During that time, Leanne and I learned another language, taught at a theological college, mentored students, and were immersed in a local church-planting movement. We saw God do things we could never have dreamed of that reinforced His sovereignty in growing His Kingdom. This experience was transformative. Through rigorous cross-cultural training and immersion

in a very different culture, I gained frameworks and habits that I now see as essential for rural, regional and remote ministry – exactly the kind of formation **StartWell** seeks to provide from the outset.

As BCA understands well, rural, regional and remote ministry often involves cross cultural realities alongside isolation, high visibility, role overload, and complex Indigenous and socio economic contexts. **StartWell** is designed to meet these realities head on – building resilience, cultivating cultural adaptability, strengthening ministry skills, and deeply connecting people to the BCA family from the outset. The program is delivered over the first two years of service, and needs to be intentionally flexible, supporting people across multiple states, time zones, family circumstances, and ministry settings – largely online.

StartWell is a gift I wish we had when we first arrived in the Pilbara.

Malcolm Reid
StartWell Coordinator



LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Word Search

T	P	Q	R	U	D	O	W	X	P	S	B	R	Z	I
C	O	M	P	A	S	S	I	O	N	A	T	E	O	H
E	C	W	W	T	T	E	F	I	H	E	C	B	Q	V
O	L	K	H	A	M	N	O	D	E	L	I	T	I	E
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E	P	R	Y	U	D	B	G	W	P	M	R	O	I	C
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A	B	H	E	E	U	N	Q	D	A	W	N	W	Y	P
G	S	S	W	N	B	I	A	D	S	R	Q	D	F	B
E	E	Q	I	I	J	K	R	U	U	N	T	P	U	X
D	Q	K	G	D	W	B	L	O	H	O	F	I	C	V

WORD LIST:

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| BUILD | COMPASSIONATE | FORGIVE | HEART |
| HUMBLE | LOVE | NEIGHBOUR | SHARE |
| CARE | ENCOURAGE | GOD | HELP |
| KIND | MIND | PRAY | TREAT |

WINTER BRAIN GAME

When it's cold outside in winter, being able to rug up and sit somewhere warm to engage in a little brain game is sometimes just what you need. So settle in for today's quiz, answers are listed on the bottom of page ...

1. How many Field Staff families do we have in Tasmania?
2. How many people were recorded to live in Australia at the end of 2025?
3. What kind of Ridge area does BCA support?
4. What precious stones are found in the Ridge area?
5. Where is the easternmost place that BCA serves in?
6. True or False, we serve in an area that is actually called Shark Bay
7. True or False, there are a large population of Dugongs that live in Shark Bay
8. What is the distance from Port Hedland to Norfolk Island?
9. When did BCA begin?
10. What is one important way you can support BCA?
11. Kangaroo Island in South Australia is one of the best places to see Australian wildlife. What animals are you likely to see there?
12. How many locations around Australia are currently supported by BCA? (don't include national or regional offices, and be careful not to double up if more than one family serves there)

Opais 5. Norfolk Island 6. True 7. True 8. Approx 5000 km 9. 1919 10. Through prayer 11. Kangaroos, koalas, sea lions, 1. To avoid the heat 15. 66 16. 65 17. John 11:35 Jesus wept 18. That the Lord of the harvest would raise up more
rthaid.com.au/bca4kids 20. A water bottle

We hope you had fun playing along! Let me know how many you got!! Rachel.Dirks@bushchurcaid.com.au

13. What are the common houses people live in Coober Pedy called?
14. Why do they live underground in Coober Pedy?
15. How many books are there in the Bible?
16. How many times does the Bible say do not fear (or words to that affect)?
17. What is the shortest verse in the Bible?
18. What is the daily prayer we ask people to pray at BCA?
19. How can you sign up for BCA 4 Kids?
20. What is the gift you receive when you sign up to BCA 4 Kids?

Answers: 1. Four 2. 27.7 million 3. Lightning Ridge 4. Black seals, echidnas, platypus and goannas 12. 38 13. Dugouts 14. ...



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!



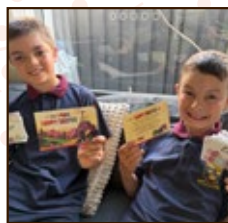
Around the country



GOULBURN, NSW: BCA staff and Nomads attended a praise and thanksgiving service for Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn Mark Short after he was appointed Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia.



LIGHTNING RIDGE, NNSW: The Langmead and the Ogg children loved their new BCA 4 Kids water bottles.



SYDNEY, NSW: Mitchell and Ethan Boughton were delighted to receive their BCA 4 Kids Easter Cards and Easter Story Eggs. They attend Holy Trinity Kingsford Anglican Church.



ADELAIDE, SA: BCA Connect Summer Edition saw over 200 people hear about our work in South Australia and the Northern Territory.



SAN REMO, VIC: Adrian Lane and Greg Harris commissioned Marinus & Hannah van Meerten to serve with BCA in mid-April.



NORFOLK ISLAND: A CFT tour group recently visited the Island and enjoyed meeting the Carletons and their visit to St Barnabas'.



A return to supporting ministry in Port Hedland

At the end of last year Bush Church Aid agreed to come on board and partner with us in the work here in Hedland. This is a wonderful blessing for many reasons...

1. the prayers of Christians all over Australia for our work;
2. significant financial support for the parish;
3. the personal support for our family.

So how does this impact our work?

Youth Group

The big news coming out of this is that we have started a Youth Group! We now have nine high schoolers in our church family, and some adults put their hands up to help lead it with Eion.

We are so thankful to God for our church family's desire to love the youth of our church and town by starting this Youth Group. It is our

prayer that Eion and the leaders will work well together, and that the youth will grow in their relationship with God, with one another, and that they will invite their unbelieving friends along.

Growth Groups

The other exciting development in Port Hedland is that we are trialling a change to Growth Groups, to have a ladies' group and a men's group. Eion is leading the men's group, while the leadership of the ladies group is being shared between Claire and two other ladies. Hopefully this change will help those men and ladies who haven't been coming along to get involved, while providing opportunities for Claire and the other two ladies leading to



FAR LEFT:
Port Hedland

TOP RIGHT:
'Turning of the sod' on the site of the new Port Hedland Missions to Seafarers Centre on Friday 17 April

BOTTOM RIGHT:
The Simmons



grow in their ability to teach God's Word.

Renovation plans

Since we re-opened the church in South Hedland for services, we have been planning to renovate the kitchen and bathrooms. We're going to DIY it with Eion's Dad kindly agreeing to come and help. He's a professional cabinet maker so it's a blessing to have him on the job. The plan is to look at the bathrooms after the kitchen is complete... one step at a time!

We are so grateful to God for Eion's Dad's willingness to come and help renovate the kitchen in the South Hedland church and pray the new kitchen will be a wonderful resource for gospel work.

Mission to Seafarers

Apart from our regular day to day work in the church, Eion is heavily involved in the Port Hedland

Ministry to Seafarers Centre, as the secretary of the management committee. With people leaving town or stepping down, Eion is now the only local member. As a result Eion put his hand up to be both secretary and deputy chairperson. It is looking like a big year for the centre, with appointments of both a Senior Chaplain & CEO. There's also a merger ahead with the MTSNWA Company which looks after MTS Centres in Dampier & Geraldton. This is something we've been working towards for two years. The new Port Hedland Seafarers' Centre building is also beginning construction which has been more than 10 years in the making! So it's a busy time!

We are so grateful to be part of the BCA community and are really thankful for your prayers and support!

Eion & Claire Simmons



A positive start to 20

We've had an encouraging start to 2026 in Cloncurry!

When we returned to Cloncurry from our post-Christmas Sydney break the rain stopped momentarily before starting up again, yet this did not stop us getting back into ministry. Our focus this year has been continuing the Cloncurry morning service where we are doing a series on the Kingdom of God and looking at the unfolding revelation of God's Kingdom from Genesis to Revelation in a big picture Bible overview. Our services have been well attended with an encouraging number of kids and families.

A new service

Our next big focus has been commencing a new Sunday evening service in Cloncurry. Held in the hall rather than the church building, this service has a more casual style with interactive Bible teaching and a mid-service supper break. We have had 12–15 on average attend each week, including new people of various ages, others that have not been able to attend Sunday morning and some from our morning congregation who are coming along

to support the service. It's been a great encouragement and joy to try something different as we keep seeking to reach more people with the Good News of Jesus.

We hold this service three times a month, but not on the afternoons we are at Julia Creek. Whilst we hadn't been able to get to Julia Creek to start the year due to flooded roads, we held our Easter



Singing during a kids' spot in church



FAR LEFT:
Julia Creek
Christmas Carols

TOP RIGHT:
Simon preaching
in his BCA shirt!

BOTTOM RIGHT:
A full church service



service there on Palm Sunday where we also had an adult baptism. It's always amazing to watch God save, grow and transform a person through His Holy Spirit.

Other ministries

Other ministries have also restarted including our *mainly music* outreach playgroup for 0–5 year olds in the church hall. We had 10 families attend the first week back and more new families the following week.

Simon has returned to teaching RI at Cloncurry State School and it's been a very positive and fruitful start. We are very thankful that God has answered our prayers for a new State School chaplain! Matt Davis (a member of our congregation who has been in Cloncurry for three years) finished his job as a carpenter and started in the chaplain role last term – a great encouragement to the school community.

As a way of engaging men in our community, Matt and Simon recently organised a men's touch football game (NSW vs QLD) in partnership with the wellbeing organisation *Outback Futures*. We had 26 players

sign up from the community, and another 25 or so spectators on the night. Simon shared a bit about who he was and men's mental health, as well inviting people to follow up with *Outback Futures* and the church for more support. It was a fun, competitive game with Queensland winning 6–2. With thanks to God, we also had a man from the game come to church the following Sunday.

Bible Studies

Our two Bible study groups – Know Your Bible (KYB) led by a lady in our church, and Angela's monthly women's Bible Study – also had strong attendance to begin the year. It's greatly encouraging to see more people interested in growing in their knowledge of God's Word and more of our congregation desiring to meet for fellowship and discipleship outside Sunday services.

Thank God for a great start to these ministries this year and pray that He would work powerfully through these ministries to save and grow people in 2026.

Simon & Angela Owen



Time for rejoicing in Dongara

There has been much to rejoice about in Dongara. Jesus is being proclaimed and those who don't know Jesus are hearing the Good News!

Our four-week Christmas Kids' Club ran on Fridays after school from 21 November to 12 December 2025.

You can rejoice with us that over 20 kids (ages 5 – 8) attended and heard the Good News of Jesus! Each afternoon there was afternoon tea, free play, Super Truth (Bible time), singing, craft and games. The kids had a ball and were sad for it to end.

We were encouraged to see the kids so engaged with the story of Jesus' special birth and how He came to earth to save us by dying on a cross for our sin and being raised to new life so that we can live with Him forever. They asked good questions, learned a great song about the glorious night that Jesus came to earth, and memorised a Bible verse.

We are so thankful to God and continue to pray for fruit from it.

Family Carols

The families who sent their children to Kids' Club were invited to our Family Carols on Saturday 13 December (the kids made a special invite in craft time). It was the first time in quite a while since there was a family-friendly Carols in our town.

Aside from those special Kids' Club invites, we also advertised on social media and handed out printed flyers to reach the wider community. We weren't sure who would come along, but praise God we were nearly bursting at the seams! The estimate was 120 people – many of whom had never been to a Carols service before!

We started off the evening in the church with Carols, a kids talk, a quiz and a song performed by the Kids' Club kids. We finished outside with a barbecue, ice cream and games. It was a wonderfully relaxed and



FAR LEFT:
Everyday Matters

RIGHT:
Action at our
Christmas
Kids' Club

enjoyable time. We were thankful to have the help from some brothers and sisters from Geraldton (45 mins north of Dongara), particularly with music, welcoming and cooking the barbecue. We pray that God would be pleased to continue to water the seeds that were planted that evening and that He would grow His Kingdom in our town.

Everyday Matters

We run a lunchtime Christian Values Education program *Everyday Matters* for Years 1–3 in the local school with the help of two ladies – one from our congregation and one from another church. Last year, we started with eight students and ended the year with 18 regulars! So far this year we had 24 sign up! Thank you God!

The students have been looking at the Old Testament timeline and learning who God is. Our first session this year was on Creation. We had a lot of surprised looks and a few utterings of “What?!” as most of them had never heard before that God created everything. We are praying that this surprise would turn

to awe of our wonderful Creator.

Searching the Scriptures

Monday afternoon Bible study continues to be a great encouragement to David and those who attend. It's a group that loves to dive deep into the Word, ask lots of curly questions, figure out what each passage means and how it applies to their lives. Please pray they would continue to thirst after God's Word and not give up meeting together.

We are also thankful to God that we've had some new people join us at church this year and there is now a demand for an additional evening and morning women-only Bible study groups to form. We would appreciate prayers that these groups would start well and that those who attend would grow in knowledge and in love of the Lord Jesus as they delve into the Word. May they be challenged and encouraged by meeting and sharing life with fellow believers.

David & Emma Thompson

Post & Rails

WELCOME



We have three new theological bursary students in 2026 – Daniel, Shannon and Meg. **Daniel Haaksma** is a student at Brisbane School of Theology; **Meg Graham** is completing her Bachelor of Theology at SMBC, and **Shannon Sprigg** is commencing the same degree at the Bible College of South Australia. Each of these students has a heart for rural ministry.



Marinus & Hannah van Meerten and their children Samuel and Elianna have joined the BCA family. Originally from the Netherlands, Marinus studied law before moving to Australia and completing theological studies at Ridley College. Also a lawyer, Hannah has a particular heart for mercy ministries. They were commissioned to serve with BCA in San Remo, Victoria in mid-April.

CONGRATULATIONS



Samuel Ogg was ordained on 21 February in the Armidale Diocese. Samuel & Grace were also commissioned as BCA Field Staff for their Minister in Training Position at Lightning Ridge.



Scott & Eilidh Thomson were commissioned to serve with BCA by Greg Harris on Friday 24 April in Augusta, WA. They are pictured here with children Anna and James along with Greg & Karen Harris.

CONGRATULATIONS



Elza Lee (NSW/ACT Admin Assistant) married **Daniel Kang** on 21 February at the Sydney Full Gospel Church in Greenacre, Sydney. Members of the National & NSW teams were delighted to be able to attend. Daniel is the assistant minister at Kingsway Evangelical Church.

VALE



Alan Baker (15 February 1938 – 31 March 2026) served at the Timboon Mission from 1964–1968. In 1969, while assistant minister at Christ Church Darwin, he rejoined BCA and became the first priest-in-charge of the new area of Nightcliff. He also had oversight of bush country from Bachelor to the Adelaide River. Alan is survived by wife Sally, children Paul, Simon, Amy and their families.

FAREWELL



We bid a fond farewell to **Rob & Michelle Edwards** and their sons Nathan, Josh & Pete from the BCA Family.

The Edwards have served with BCA since May 2020 in which time their church has grown to include both a morning and afternoon service.

Rob will continue to lead the Strathfieldsaye Community Church, but it no longer requires BCA funding.



After more than a decade with BCA, **Craig Buchanan** has decided to explore new opportunities.

Craig first served as the office manager of the QLD/ NNSW Regional Office and then transitioned to working full time as BCA's Digital Media Officer.



From the Archives

– Where the Spirit of the Lord is...

The work of the Spirit never ceases to amaze me. In our parish He has led us into some wonderful areas of thanksgiving and joy. He has given us new insight into God's love and the Christian life.

In the part of North Queensland covered by the BCA Parish of Townview (Mount Isa) and Gunpowder there are constantly new and exciting things happening with situations of real need that require a deep and supporting ministry.

The ministry at The Monument has begun with wonderful signs in its infancy. It is a town attached to the phosphate mining venture some 120 km south of Mount Isa. It is a new and modern town. People only began to reside in it at the beginning of the year. I have established a monthly visitation in conjunction with one of the other clergy and together we take a combined worship service and the next morning we take individual communions with those who desire. I know in the Kingdom of God that numbers are not the things that count but the quality of lives. At The Monument we have an indication of both.

The town has a total population of between 100 and 130, and our combined service attracts a dozen adults and as many children. A Sunday School has been started by one of the Anglican mothers with

the help of a young single chap who can play the guitar. They had at last count over 30 children attending week by week. It is run on an Ecumenical basis, the material and support being supplied here from St. Luke's.

This willingness to become responsible for a constant Christian witness is the cause for great joy. In Duchess (one of the smaller outlying areas), we recently had the first baptism in twenty years. Again it was a combined venture with another child being baptised by the Roman Catholic priest. We held our Services together under a large Poinciana tree behind the local hotel. The total group took part in both the Services. It was a wonderful witness for all concerned as virtually the whole population (approximately 100) were there. The service made the state news and of course received good publicity in the local area. Again a cause for thanksgiving that the church is receiving publicity of its ministry.

The mining town of Gunpowder, 90 km north of Mount Isa, still exercises a significant part of the ministry in the outer area. The people in this town recently went through



LEFT:
The Sage family

BELOW:
Mt Isa Postcard
from the 1970s



a period of uncertainty because of the fluctuations in the mining industry. Some of our very strong Christian families have moved on to other areas but the strength of commitment is still there and the ministry is deeply appreciated and brings much joy. It was good to be able to exercise an involved ministry during the time of uncertainty.

Many interesting things are happening at the home base of the parish. All of the clergy of Mount Isa have recently joined with the School Principals' Association on a total Ecumenical approach to primary education. This involves seven schools including the School of the Air and covers some 4000 pupils. St. Luke's has played a leading part in the implementation of this scheme. It has been a real step forward in faith and the constant support of the home congregation has been wonderful. The inclusion of the School of the Air has been a wonderful step forward. With two of the teachers I myself have begun a weekly presentation of Religious Instruction to over 100 scattered children. This aspect of ministry is

something that we have struggled for against difficult odds for the last three years. It is a real cause for joy and thanksgiving that it is now a reality.

As always the constant demands in so many areas place a great responsibility on the family at home and it is always a cause of constant thanksgiving for the understanding and support that comes from the family. They enjoy being part of the total ministry and often have become involved in some of the work outside Townview, e.g. the baptism at Duchess.

The people of St. Luke's as always are extremely grateful for the total support that they receive from BCA. This fellowship and experience of belonging to a wider ministry is something that brings great happiness to many of our families

*The Revd
Albert Sage*

BCA Field Staff 1973–1977

This article first appeared in the July 1976 issue of The Real Australian. Every past issue of The Real Australian can be found at: bushchurchoaid.com.au/archive

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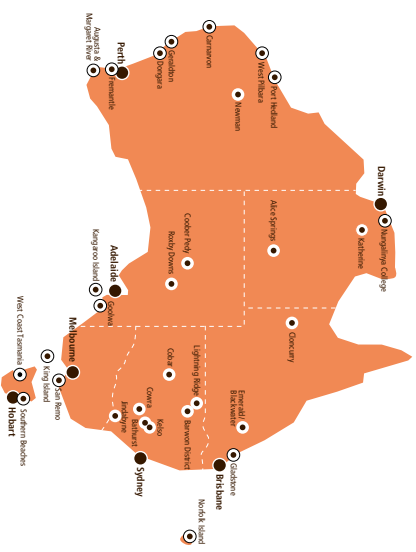
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