

Outback Owens

with Simon & Angela Owen • March 2026



Since our last newsletter (October 2025) we have had the Christmas season, enjoyed a family holiday in NSW, commenced 2026 ministry back at Cloncurry & Julia Creek and started a new 5pm evening service in Cloncurry.

Christmas season

Christmas always begins early in outback towns because many people go away over Christmas. So during November we had the opportunity to reflect on the good news of Jesus' birth in RI lessons at both Cloncurry and Julia Creek. It's always a joy to share the true Christmas message with kids and to see them discover that Christmas is about Jesus! Throughout November we also shared the Christmas story in song and dance with little ones and their families at our *mainly music* program in Cloncurry which was also a great joy.

In early December our kids dance in a Christmas community concert which is always a great opportunity to connect with many people in the community. We then have three main Christmas services; including Julia Creek and Cloncurry Carols services and our Christmas Day service in Cloncurry. All our services had an encouraging number of people attend, including many visitors and new people. Messages included: 'Are you ready for Christmas?', 'Christmas in three words' and 'The Glorious Sign'. For the second year in a row, we

organised a Christmas Outreach Barbecue at the Dam Playground which involved many non-church families. Using a Christmas tree, manger and various other props, Simon shared a kid-friendly gospel message with all those attending about gifts we can be thankful for and the ultimate gift of Jesus.

We were very thankful to be invited to lunch with a new family from our congregation on Christmas Day. We enjoyed a delicious lunch and a swim in the pool before the rain came, and their hospitality was a great encouragement and blessing to us.



Christmas lunch with friends

Please join us in giving thanks to God for fruitful gospel opportunities over the Christmas season and pray for the seeds planted to grow, and for visitors to return.

Banner Image: Cloncurry Sunset

Circle Image: The Owens

Middle Image: Christmas Outreach Barbecue at the Dam Playground

Bottom Image: Esther & Grace ready to dance in the Christmas concert



Flooding near Julia Creek

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Flooding & Holidays

Some very heavy rain continued over the weekend, which was quite a contrast from the previous Christmas where we had extreme heat and bushfires. After torrential rain the night before our flight to Sydney, we woke in the morning to flooding up to our front door and howling wind. With thanks to God we managed to pack the car in ankle deep water at 6am, carry the kids to the car in bucketing rain and drive to Mt Isa airport in wet and wild conditions. We praise God that we arrived safely at Mt Isa airport and had smooth travel to Sydney for our three-week holiday which involved celebrating Christmas

with family and being refreshed with many fun family activities.

Our time in Sydney also included an encouraging visit to Menai Anglican (one of our support churches) and we enjoyed lunch with a ministry family from the church. Back in Cloncurry and Julia Creek, The Revd Nick Hearnshaw filled in as a locum, leading services and doing ministry whilst we were away. We are very thankful for Revd Nick and Ruth for their commitment to the Lord and willingness to serve God's church at Cloncurry and Julia Creek. During this time the rain continued and many surrounding properties, particularly around Julia Creek, were flooded in like small



Enjoying time on the NSW South Coast

islands. Sadly, many station owners we know lost (and had to kill) many cattle due to the flood waters and disease, and millions of dollars of fencing and roads were damaged which will require months of repair work. We want to say thanks to all that messaged and emailed during this time checking in and praying for our community. During this wet season, we have unfortunately been unable to get to Julia Creek due to road closures but we have remained in contact with people on properties and have been encouraged by their ongoing trust in God and resilience to keep persevering through the challenging times.

Please join us in praying for all property owners who have experienced losses and that the lush growth resulting from the rain will result in a fruitful recovery season.



Safely at Mt Isa Airport after a wet drive

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Getting into 2026 ministry

After we returned from our Sydney break the rain stopped momentarily before starting up again, yet this has not stopped us getting back into ministry. Our focus since returning 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 to begin the year, and we have had an encouraging number of kids and families.

Also, 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 had 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 are holding 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 church to start the year due to flooded roads, we held our Easter 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.

Please join us in giving God thanks for all those attending our church services and pray they will continue to grow in faith and love for the Lord.

Pray also that our 5pm service will reach new people in our town and that Lord will continue to be at work strengthening our Julia Creek congregation in 2026.

Our Tuesday night prayer group also continued to meet throughout the summer, and it's been a joy to return and reconnect with the prayer group. Other ministries have also restarted including our *mainly music* outreach playgroup for 0–5 year olds in the church hall which had 10 families attending the first week back and more new families the following week. Simon has also returned to teaching RI at Cloncurry State School and it's been a very positive and fruitful start.

New State School Chaplain

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 this term which has been a great encouragement to the school community.

As a way of engaging men in our community, Matt and Simon recently organised a community 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 invited people to follow up with *Outback Futures* and the church for more support. It was a fun, competitive game with QLD winning 6–2. With thanks to God, we also had a man from the game come to church the following Sunday.

Please join us for giving God thanks for Matt's chaplain role and pray for God to use him in this role for His glory and purposes. Also join us in giving thanks for the all the men who were engaged through the recent touch football game and especially for the man who is now coming to church.



Praise God for a full church service



Simon preaching in his BCA shirt

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Our two Bible study groups – Know Your Bible (KYB) Group led by a lady in our church, and Angela’s monthly women’s Bible Study – have 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 of Sunday services. **Thank God for a great start to these ministries this term and pray that He would work powerfully through these ministries to save and grow people in 2026.**

Personally it has been an encouraging start to the year. Grace and Esther have started the school year well and are constantly working hard at school and shining God’s light. Josiah has started Kindy (pre-school) and is super excited to go a few days a week. We have had some kid-free Mondays and have enjoyed a coffee (when the coffee shop is open) and some refreshing swims in the flowing river. Family life and ministry are busy so we are thankful for these Mondays and have enjoyed finding hidden gems in God’s creation.

We appreciate your prayers for

God’s protection and blessing on our family, for strength and joy in ministry, and for good rest and refreshment especially on Mondays.



encouraging emails, cards and letters over the last six months. We greatly appreciate everyone’s prayers, support and encouragement. We apologise

Looking ahead, in the coming weeks we will continue with all our regular ministries. We also have three Easter services planned for this weekend (including a dawn service on Resurrection Sunday at the Cloncurry lookout) and an infant baptism on a remote property two hours from Mount Isa during the school holidays.” We also plan to do some family camping after the infant baptism at Adel’s Grove to give ourselves a small break before getting into Term 2.

We would like to say thanks to all that have sent us

that we have not gotten back to everyone, but we read and receive everything with great gratitude.

Please pray for God’s ongoing grace to be at work in all infants and adults being baptised and confirmed and pray that others will consider this step for 2026. And pray that our Easter services will powerfully convict all who attend of the wonderful salvation available to us in Christ Jesus so that believers may be strengthened in faith and non-believers saved.

Blessings and thanks,
Simon, Angela, Grace, Esther & Josiah

Pray for

**our work in
Cloncurry**

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