

Potholes and Playgrounds

with Rachael Bell • October 2025



One of the joys of my job is visiting my SRE Teachers and Chaplains in their schools, usually for either SRE lesson observations or chaplaincy review meetings. I do one of these for every one of my Central West team at least once a year.

Usually, these fall in the last two terms of the year, so the next couple of months will be pretty busy! However, both terms 2 & 3, as well as the holidays, have been busy.

Over the last couple of months, I have visited several Chaplains and SRE Teachers. Here is an update on two of those Chaplains.

Daniel, Chaplain at Bletchington Public School in Orange: I heard just how much his school values having him in this role and the positive influence he has had in their school community this year.

Daniel showed me the wellbeing room he operates out of and talked about the Seasons For Growth program he was working through with a small group of students. He also showed me the postbox he set up outside the room so students could let him know they were keen to chat with him on the days he is at school. This is a wonderful initiative that is already being utilised positively by students at the school.

Alfrene, Chaplain at Dubbo College, South Campus: Alfrene has been a chaplain with SU Australia for a while. Alfrene was previously supported by BCA.

She is currently at Gilgandra Public School and this year, she also stepped into the high school space in Dubbo. I was delighted to hear that Alfrene had an immediate impact with students at the school, making positive progress in communicating with one very quiet student within her first two days in the role.

Since then, Alfrene has developed growing relationships with many students and staff at the school. She is seen as a bit of a 'mother hen' in the school, showing care and compassion in a way that some students have identified as currently lacking in their difficult home lives. Alfrene is also supporting in-school initiatives to reduce student truancy and increase class attendance, which has proven highly successful so far.

Praise God for John, a new Chaplain who started at Darlington Point PS in Term 3 (after one & a half years of the position being vacant). Give thanks for a good start and that he is fitting in well at his school.

Please continue to pray over the positions that remain vacant throughout my area. There has been an increase in people enquiring about roles, but unfortunately, this hasn't

Banner Image: A playground

Circle Image: Rachael

Side Image: Daniel with the postbox



The Amber Lights band, with Ilan (third from left) in Orange

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resulted in many applications thus far. Please pray fervently that we might end 2025 with all positions filled by people who are the right fit for each role.

Events

In late June, one of the awesome Quizworx teams, consisting of Jordan, Gabbie, and Phoebe, along with their alter egos (also known as puppets), visited Wellington and the surrounding towns to present to SRE students at several schools. A couple of these schools don't have regular SRE classes this year due to a lack of local teachers, so this was a wonderful opportunity for them to hear the good news of Jesus.

I was delighted to join the team to see one of their shows at Wellington Public School and then catch up with them for lunch afterwards. It was fun to realise we all already knew each other, either

I'm so thankful for teams like this who are willing to travel out of Sydney to visit regional areas and provide opportunities like this

through SMBC connections or friend connections. Local SRE Coordinator Chris Campion helped pull the tour together and joined us for lunch.

The Power to Change band Amber Lights, toured Central West NSW during September. The team visited several schools in my area, and the shows were a great success. Students listened to some recognised popular songs and new music, as well

as a powerful testimony about the challenges of trying to fit in and making tough (sometimes wrong) choices as a teenager and eventually finding Jesus and realising that what God thinks of you is more important than what other people think.

I got to catch up with the team over lunch on Thursday and joined them, and SRE Teacher Ilan, for the performance at Canobolas High School in Orange, their fifth show out of the seven they had scheduled that week. I'm so thankful for teams like this who are willing to travel out of Sydney to visit regional areas and provide opportunities like this. It was an additional blessing for those schools that currently don't have an SRE teacher and therefore do not have regular classes.

Praise God for all of the wonderful ministry opportunities that have occurred in public schools throughout the Central West over the last few months. Thank God for equipping those talented individuals with gifts and confidence to perform in front of large groups of students and share the good news of Jesus with them.

Conferences & Retreats

During the July school holidays, SU Australia held an online conference with local hubs held across the nation. I hosted one at my house for any team



Rachael with the QuizWorx team in Wellington (L-R) Chris, Rachael, Gabbie, Phoebe & Jordan

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members who wanted to gather in person. It was a wonderful day of encouragement and feeling inspired in our ministry roles.

As part of the conference, there is always a celebration of all those receiving Years of Service awards for their first five years or every multiple of five years thereafter.

This year, we celebrated five Years of Service for Chris (Chaplain at Parkes High School) and Tim (SRE Teacher at The Henry Lawson HS in Grenfell and Young HS – he recently finished teaching at Cowra HS). We also celebrated 10 Years of Service for Peter Volkofsky, who teaches SRE in several schools between

Narromine and Coonabarabran. Some of you may remember Peter when he was supported by BCA.

During September, I attended a retreat with my SU Australia NSW team members (other FDMs, Regional Directors, support staff, etc) in Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and training together, and I learnt a bit more about both me and our team in the process. Those of us who had reached Years of Service milestones were also presented with our certificates.

Praise God for the team retreat, which provided time for rest and reflection.



The SU Together Conference



Rachael presenting Peter Volkofsky with his service certificate



Bathurst Diocese Family Camp

Other ministry connections

As I have for several years now, I attended the Bathurst Anglican Diocese Church Family Camp in August.

It is always a fun-filled weekend and a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with people I might only see once a year at camp.

Since starting in my current role, it has also been a fantastic opportunity for me to connect with those in ministry throughout the area I cover, which often yields numerous fruitful conversations.

I love seeing these people, some of whom I see more regularly now as I travel throughout my area, spending time connecting and learning together.

This year, The Revd Dr Mark Earngey came to speak and get to know us. One of the things I loved hearing him say was this: *"Let's go home and not plant seeds, but plant acorns that will grow into strong oaks!"* ...though I will say there is something beautiful about wildflowers that pop up everywhere, too!



The Ridgecrest Campsite

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The weekend following the family camp, I was on the road visiting Grenfell, doing a lesson observation with Tim and meeting with the SRE board, as well as having an afternoon tea with the new Anglican minister, Steve and his wife.

Then it was onto Cowra, where I chatted with BCA's Ben Connelly and Baptist minister JJ about SRE and met with some of the Cowra board members.

I then headed to Dubbo for my chaplaincy review meeting with Alfrene. While in Dubbo for the weekend, I opted to attend the Western Plains Christian Convention on Saturday, which was both encouraging and a fun opportunity to see friends I don't get to see regularly these days.

The main reason I was in Dubbo that weekend, though, was to visit Dubbo Anglican Church, which has recently become a BCA partner church of mine.

This is an exciting connection for me. I used to live in Dubbo. I was at SMBC at the same time as the Thornhill family, who are now ministering there, and I know a teacher, chaplain, and board member who all attend services there. I feel incredibly lucky to have personal connections with people at all of my partner

churches, even those churches I have yet to visit in person, but I look forward to visiting them soon. It was a wonderful visit, and I thoroughly enjoyed sharing about my role and the SU schools ministry in Central West NSW and meeting and greeting both new and old friends.

Thank you for your continued encouragement and support of me and those I'm ministering with. Your emails, texts, phone

calls, and cards always bring a smile to my day and I am overwhelmingly thankful for your prayer support.

Please pray that I would rely on Jesus each and every day, knowing that I can achieve nothing of worth without Him, and that I would ask our Father daily what His priorities are for me. Ask that I might become more like Christ in all that I do and strive to be.



The SU Australia NSW team



Rachael, Nathan, Stan, Mell & Jono – with their SU Australia service certificates

In Christ,
Rachael

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