

2024 BCA Victoria Annual Report



bca 
bush church aid

Going the distance

Strathfieldsaye Community Church



Victorian AGM 2024

2024 in review

Yet again, God was very kind to the Bush Church Aid Society in 2024, as we sought to 'go the distance' in reaching Australia for Christ, particularly in rural, regional and remote Australia. So many prayers were answered, as God led and equipped. A big thank you to those who prayed, served and gave financially. Please keep praying that we would follow our Father's leading and that Christ would grow His kingdom by pouring out His Spirit through His Word, enabling ministries to be abundantly fruitful.

Across Australia about 30 Field Staff were supported by the Society in some way, some very substantially: in church planting and evangelism, parish ministry, schools' ministry and Indigenous evangelism, discipleship and ministry training. Each one of the black

dots at Field Staff locations on the iconic orange BCA map on the inside rear cover represents an average annual contribution by the Society of \$60,000.00

In addition to supporting Field Staff, the Society also supported our National Director, Canon Greg Harris, our Indigenous Ministry Officer, The Revd Neville Naden, and four full-time and one part-time state-based Regional Officers, who were all engaged in a range of preaching, evangelistic, training and pastoral ministries. A number of unique and worthwhile programs were also supported, including the Nungalinga College Chaplaincy Program, BCA Nomads, BCA ONTRACK (for recent graduates new to work in the bush), six Theological Bursaries & BCA4Kids.

BCA supported staff in 16 of the 23 Anglican Dioceses in Australia, and in a significant number of these, BCA's support was absolutely integral.



The Society also supported staff in a number of interdenominational and independent ministries, such as Nungalinya College in Darwin (a training college for Indigenous church leaders), First Nations Ministry Training (in association with the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship), Scripture Union and the Aboriginal Berean Community Church in South Australia.

Some of the many highlights of 2024 were the support of four training curates in the Northern Territory, Bendigo and Bathurst; the provision of the bursaries for six theological students interested in country ministry, including two Indigenous men; and the Field Staff Conference at Collaroy on Sydney's northern beaches, from 7–12 July. This conference was attended by virtually all Field Staff and their families, together with those receiving bursaries. It was a great delight to see everybody enjoying and learning from each other. At

the Conference I led a workshop on evaluating and facilitating evangelism in congregations. As the nation continues to recover from the pandemic, it was a great encouragement to see Field Staff making good use of special services, local events and evangelistic programs to rebuild outreach and evangelism in their communities, as well as train congregation members. Easter & Christmas services and events, public baptisms, harvest festivals, markets, shows, music Festivals and even a Bounty Day service, were just some examples. Many BCA-supported churches have embraced the HOPE25 outreach program of the national Anglican Church and all manner of initiatives are already bearing fruit. Please pray for them in this.

Victorian Field Staff

Specifically in Victoria it has been our privilege and delight to support four couples over 2024, together with

Mr Lonny Bendessi, an Indigenous man from Ceduna studying at Ridley College.

The Revd Jude & Mr Andy Benton serve in Mallacoota and Cann River in the Diocese of Gippsland, where Jude is the only minister in the community, at the only church, a joint Anglican-Uniting congregation. Jude has continued to support the community as it rebuilds after the devastating fires of 2019–2020 and to reach out with the good news of the Gospel in a variety of creative ways, including a weekly program on community radio. Jude is now also working on a project to integrate theology and church ministry with disaster-struck communities, with a view to providing resources for churches in similar circumstances. A special thank you to The Revd Kathryn Hilton who, with her husband John, was able to provide locum ministry while the Bentons took

Long Service Leave, during which time Kathryn led the congregation through the Alpha Course.

The Revd Steve & Mrs Vanessa Weickhardt continued to serve as the Mallee Missioner, based at Red Cliffs, south of Mildura. Steve has served both that parish (the Anglican Parish of Sunraysia South) as it has undergone a process of reorganisation and the Anglican-Uniting Cooperating Parish of the Southern Mallee, with centres at Ouyen, Walpeup, Patchewollock and Underbool. In 2024 Steve also concluded his MBA studies, which have provided him with skills that I know he will continue to use in the future. It is a delight to welcome the Weickhardts to our 2025 BCA Victoria Annual Dinner, as they bring their Mallee Ministry to a close and begin new service in the Diocesan Office in Bendigo.



Left: Lonny Bendessi at the Victorian AGM, Right: The Bentons

The Revd Jacob & Mrs Sarah Kelly have also continued their ministry in Kyabram, with a particular aim of reaching families. Kyabram's growth, with its new housing estates and its Zoo (newly integrated into Zoos Victoria), continues to provide new opportunities, and the Kellys are ideally placed and gifted to make the most of these. Jacob also recently completed his B.Th and B.Min through Ridley College. The Society has supported Jacob in these studies.

We have also seen answered prayer in the growth of the Strathfieldsaye Community Church, another joint Anglican-Uniting venture on the growing south-eastern edge of Bendigo. This has been led by **The Revd Rob & Mrs Michelle Edwards**, who spoke about their work at our 2024 Annual Dinner. In addition to the morning service, a fortnightly afternoon service has been established, after much prayer and planning. A monthly Youth Group has also started. BCA's support for Strathfieldsaye has been progressively diminishing, with the goal of self-sustainability in the next few years looking increasingly achievable.



*Top: The Weickhardts
Middle: The Kelly family
Bottom: The Edwards family*

Nomads

It was such a delight to see our Nomads Coordinators, Mr & Mrs Greg and Jocelyn Lay, featured on the front cover of the August 2024 issue of *The Melbourne Anglican*, with an excellent accompanying article. This can still be accessed by searching The Melbourne Anglican website.

The Nomads ministry continues to grow, both in the number of active Nomads and in the range of their activities. Please pray for the ongoing fruitfulness of the Nomad ministry, and that they would be an encouragement wherever they visit.



Top: Scenes from the 2025 Nomads gathering
Bottom: Nomads on the road



Adrian with the some of the Karen congregation at St Andrew's Corio-Norlane

Deputations

It has been an absolute privilege and delight to visit churches right across Victoria to thank supporters, encourage support for the work of the Society and preach. Visits have often included parish lunches, meetings with ministers, & overnight stays, and I have very much felt dependent on the prayers of others for fruitfulness and safety. I list the visits for your interest and to encourage you with the range and variety of supporters we have for the Society's work: Holy Trinity Bendigo; Bentleigh; Buninyong (Ballarat); St Mark's Camberwell Youth Group; Colac and Birregurra; Corio-Norlane; Croydon Hills; St James' Dandenong; Elmore; Emerald; Forest Hill; Glen Waverley; Healesville & Yarra Glen;

Inverloch and Wonthaggi; Ivanhoe, including their Chinese Congregation; Kyabram; Mildura; Mitcham; Mt Eliza; North Dandenong; Ouyen and Walpeup; Pakenham; Red Cliffs; Stratford and Munro; Strathfieldsaye and Vermont South.

It was also a privilege to participate in four Ridley College Mission Awareness Days and numerous other events at the College; a panel at the Bible College of South Australia, together with preaching training for Engage Work Faith in Adelaide; the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students National Training Event at Belgrave Heights; and a display table at the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Synod.



Adrian at the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students Victorian National Training Event at Belgrave Heights with Allen Knight

It was also most encouraging to have our Regional Committee Chair, The Revd Stephen May, assist with deputations, visiting Banyule, Greensborough, Redemption Craigieburn, Surrey Hills and Templestowe. Other members of our Regional Committee also helped with invitations: The Revd Joy Sandefur spoke at the Ridley College Missions Awareness Week on Literacy and Bible Translation, and Mrs Jane Lamont, together with her husband Murray, represented BCA Victoria at a Christian Fellowship Tours gathering.

Those who were here at our 2024 Annual Meeting will remember Bishop Peter Grice's most comprehensive and challenging presentation about the ministry of the Diocese of Central Queensland, based in Rockhampton. The next day Bishop Peter was able to speak at St Thomas' Burwood.

St Thomas' has partnered with The Revd Jen Hercott, who is supported by the Society in her role as Registrar of the Diocese. Jen was also able to visit Burwood in 2024 to speak about her work. Similarly, Ms Emily Quinn, who serves as Director of Foundation Studies at Nungalinga College, was able to visit one of her Link Parishes, St Philip's Deep Creek, to speak about her service there.



Rod Morris & Greg Harris

Events

Kirkby Club Lunch

Our tenth annual Kirkby Club lunch for former BCA staff and Nomads was held on 6 March 2024. This is a wonderfully encouraging group of supporters, who together represent an extraordinary amount of ministry knowledge and experience. Our National Director joined us for an update, and, as always, a key feature of our gathering was to pray for the Society's work.

Annual Meeting and Dinner

Our 2024 BCA Victoria Annual Meeting and Dinner held at Glen Waverley on 4 May was a feast of fellowship and encouragement as over 130 supporters gathered to learn more and pray for the Society's work. It isn't by chance that after praying for Bishop Peter Grice and the Diocese of Central Queensland, God has raised up two ministry couples, the Pipers and the Brownes to serve at Emerald/Blackwater and Gladstone respectively, supported by the Society. Other new appointments in the Diocese

have also come to fruition. We have also seen similar answers to prayer for the work at Strathfieldsaye, following the presentation by The Revd Rob & Mrs Michelle Edwards. I look forward to seeing the answers to our prayers tonight. Please pray too for Mr Lonny Bendessi, whom I interviewed at our meeting last year, as he finalises his studies at the Bible College of South Australia and serves in the Berean Church.

Spring Gatherings

Our 2024 Spring Gathering program in September was also a feast, as we heard from The Revd Dave Horne about the church plant he leads on the Southern Beaches of Tasmania. With about 8000 people in the area, no other ministers, and no church buildings of any denomination, the congregation meets at a local campsite on Sunday afternoons. Dave & Lauren are ideally suited to reach the community, with a young family and a keen interest in

Events continued...

surfing. Please pray for their encouragement and fruitfulness.

Lunch meetings with Dave were held at Glen Waverley; Holy Trinity, Bendigo; Sunbury and Warragul. A coffee and dessert evening was held at Ivanhoe, and a Young Adults Dinner was hosted by The Rev Trev Bell and his wife Cindy, at Holy Trinity Bendigo. This was a new addition to the program, attended by about 25 young adults, and I want to especially thank the Bells for their enthusiasm and hospitality. All churches offered their facilities and provided catering as part of their mission commitment, and I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank them for their wonderfully welcoming hospitality & generosity.

We were also able to arrange for Dave to be interviewed by *The Melbourne Anglican* in a preparatory article, and an excellent feature interview was published on 18 August 2024. This is available to read by searching The Melbourne Anglican website.

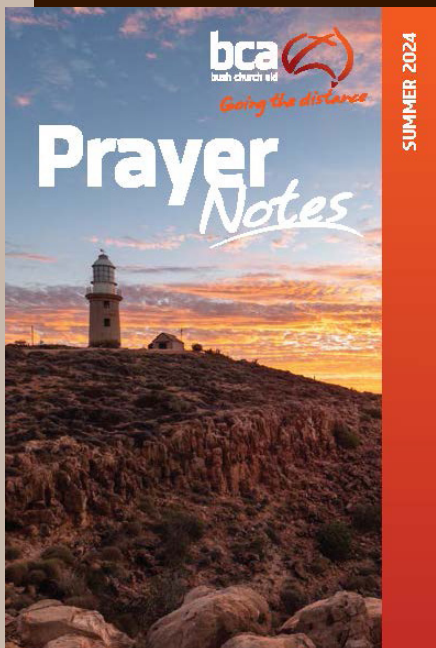


Top: The Horne family
Bottom: Dave speaks at one of the Spring Gatherings

Prayer

I continue to see God answering our prayers in response to our pleas. Thank you so much to those who use the BCA Prayer Notes daily, either electronically or in paper form. A big thank you, too, to The Revd Ernest Horth, who has continued to lead a small monthly BCA Prayer Meeting at Boronia. Prayer is also a significant component of all our events and meetings. The Regional Committee, for instance, has been cycling through the five Dioceses in Victoria at each of its meetings.

In 2024, I completed a fresh edition of *Faith, Hope and Love: Pray for Regional Victoria*, where I suggest Prayer Points for each of our regional Victorian municipalities. Copies of pages are sent out with receipts, distributed at deputations and events, and distributed to libraries, Bishops and interested supporters. I continue to receive feedback, both about answered prayer and items to include. Please promote their use.



Top: Victorian Regional Prayer Notes;
Bottom: BCA Prayer Notes

Link Parishes

We have continued to link parishes with specific Field Staff or a BCA-supported ministry. As part of this, parishes are asked to nominate a BCA Advocate, who can alert intercessors at services and various groups in the parish to recent Newsletters from Field Staff, as well as promote BCA events and the work of the Society more generally. If your church is not linked, and you would like it to be, please speak to your minister or Missions Committee, and ask them to contact me.

Support

Regional Committee

It is such a delight and encouragement to be supported by a competent and enthusiastic Regional Committee, led by our Chair, The Revd Stephen May. Stephen's experience, wisdom, grace and patience have been a steadfast anchor. He also serves on the National Council, Executive and Ministry Priority Panel. Mrs Jane Lamont, Mr Peter Michalke and The Revd Wayne Schuller serve on the Council, with Wayne also serving on the Executive. Each serve on the Regional Committee ex officio, together with Mr Anthony Andreazza, The Revd Julie Blinco-Smith and The Revd Joy Sandefur. We are sorry to be losing

Mrs Ann Bolton and The Revd Rod Morris from the Regional Committee in 2025, due to conflicting responsibilities, and I very much want to thank them both for their faithful and thoughtful contribution over many years. However, I am delighted that The Revd Philip Knight and Mr James McClure are joining the Committee in 2025.

The Regional Committee meets at the office at Heidelberg every two months to support and pray for the work, and helps with events, interviews and other aspects of the ministry.

Promotion

A copy of our 2023 Annual Report was sent to every Anglican parish in Victoria, together with other interested parties and supporters. This was a large and not inexpensive task. However, we received extraordinarily



The Victorian Regional Committee



From The Melbourne Anglican

Support continued...

positive response, including requests for deputations from parishes with whom we had little, if any, previous contact. We plan to do similarly this year: please pray that the Report will be well received and that the ministry would consequentially grow.

In addition to *The Melbourne Anglican* articles on the Lays and Dave Horne mentioned above, it was most encouraging to have an article on Bishop Peter Grice and the Diocese of Central Queensland in the April 2024 edition. I am delighted that the article on the Lays and the Nomad ministry was selected and promoted as one of The Melbourne Anglican's top features for 2024.

Finances

The Society made a significant step of faith in 2024 in budgeting for an

increase in donation income of seven per cent, to cover the large jump in inflation. I am absolutely delighted to report that this budget was achieved, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of our supporters. At the time of writing, Victoria reported unaudited income of \$443,784, against a budget of \$437,100, together with bequests of about \$60,000. With many worthwhile opportunities for ministry continuing to present themselves and continued cost of living increases, the National Executive has budgeted for a 6.8 per cent increase in our donation income for 2025. Please make this a matter for prayer.

Office

After nearly 22 years of service as the Victorian Office Manager, Mr Bob Barclay retired at the end of 2024. Bob's faithfulness and extraordinary labour of love will be acknowledged later in the meeting, but I would like to offer my deep thanks to him for his daily faithfulness. Bob continued to serve in a temporary and training capacity in early 2025, and for this too I am most grateful.

After a very comprehensive process of role description, advertisement and interviews, The Revd Matt Smith began as the Victorian Office Administrative Assistant in February 2025. Matt previously served as Vicar of Healesville and Yarra Glen, and both he and the parish have been keen BCA supporters. It is a delight to have him in the office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Please welcome and pray for him, as there is much to learn and do.

In 2024 we renewed the lease on our premises at St John's Heidelberg, where the car park was also remade. I would like to thank the Vicar, The Revd Denise Nichols, for her support and collegiality, and the parish more generally for their commitment to the Society's ministry.

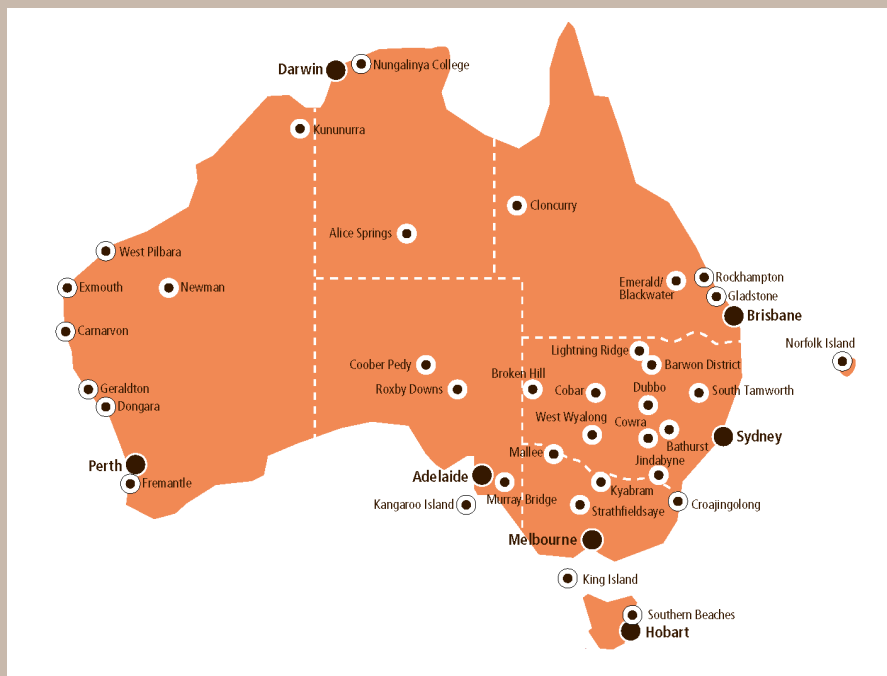
The National Team

I would also like to thank the National Office, led by our National

Director, The Revd Greg Harris, and our Chief Operating Officer, Mr Greg Bridge, for their support and prayerful care. The Communications team, including Mrs Janine van den Tillaart, who is responsible for *The Real Australian* and the Prayer Notes, and Mr Craig Buchanan, who is responsible for electronic media, do a sterling job keeping us all up to date with the many things God is doing through the Society.



Top: Bob & Veronica Barclay
Middle: Matt & Adrian
Bottom: The National Office Team



BCA Locations as of December 2024

Looking ahead

I have a nearly full calendar of deputations planned for 2025 and I again very much seek your prayers for energy, safety and fruitfulness as I bring the word of God, encourage Christians in mission and promote the work of the Society. Please do, however, urge your minister to call or email the office to arrange a deputation if nothing is planned, as I am very keen to promote awareness and support for the Society's unique and life-bringing ministry. The Revds Stephen May and Neville Naden are also deputising and speaking on various occasions throughout the year.

I am absolutely delighted that Topher Hallyburton has been able to accept our invitation to be our featured speaker for our **2025 Spring Gathering program**. He and his wife Chica are supported by the Society, as Topher serves on the staff at Alice Springs Anglican Church. Amongst a wide range of ministry responsibilities, Topher visits the local Juvenile Justice Centre, and prayer for his ministry is eagerly sought. Details of the program are found on the next page.

2025 Spring Gatherings

Monday 20 Oct 2025 Noon–2pm Spring Lunch, Glen Waverley Anglican

Tuesday 21 Oct 2025 Noon–2pm Spring Lunch, Holy Trinity, Bendigo

Tuesday 21 Oct 2025 6pm Young Adults Dinner, Holy Trinity, Bendigo

Wednesday 22 Oct 2025 Noon–2pm Spring Lunch, St Mary's, Sunbury

Wednesday 22 Oct 2025 7.30pm–9pm Coffee & Dessert, St James, Ivanhoe

Thursday 23 Oct 2025 St Paul's, Warragul, Evening Event, TBA

There has been very positive response to our practice of having a Regional Bishop speak about their Diocese at our Annual Dinners. This has broadened our knowledge of the Society's ministry across the nation, given us a good overview of each Diocese's opportunities and needs, and also given us information about specific locations. Accordingly, I am delighted to advise that Bishop Rod Chiswell from the Diocese of Armidale in North West NSW has accepted our invitation to be our featured speaker at our 2026 Annual Dinner on Saturday 2 May. The Diocese of Armidale includes the BCA-supported ministries at Lightning Ridge and Walgett/Collarenebri, has served as a generous training ground, and is where The Revd Tim Stevens (Coordinator of BCA's ONTRACK program) is based. I hope you can join us.

Finally, on a personal level, can I thank each of our supporters for their encouragement and prayer. It is a marvellous privilege to be participating in the growth of God's church in rural, regional and remote Australia. May He be glorified by our labours.

With great thanks again to God,

The Revd Adrian Lane

26 April 2024



The Bush Church Aid Society of Australia
Victorian Regional Office
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