



THE BUSH CHURCH AID SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

2000-2001

*** *The Society at the beginning of a new Millennium.***

The Bush Church Aid Society continues in to achieve its primary goal of seeking Australians for Christ.

It does this by encouraging the proclamation of Christ so that people may respond to him; by nurturing Christians in the faith and ministry; strengthening local Christian communities in their mission; providing services of Christian care and advocacy. In all that it does it seeks to develop an understanding of Christ's mission and to promote active partnership through the Church.

The Society continues to work closely with Dioceses across Australia, forming interdependent relationships, so enabling the partnerships to make the most of the available resources and opportunities of the diocese, parish and the Society, which in turn enables the Kingdom to dawn in the lives of people in remote, rural and remote urban places in Australia.

The Society continues to hold to the principle of being a "sending" body rather than a "funding" agency. This principle was set in place in 1836 when the parent body of the Society, the West Australian Missionary Society, (later to become the Colonial Church Society and later still the Colonial and Commonwealth Church Society) in response to a call for assistance from the Swan colony (Perth) formed, recruited sent and supported a priest and two lay catechists to work in the upper reaches of the Swan River Valley.

The principle of seeking ministers of the gospel (lay and ordained), who uphold the aims and objectives of the Society and who are able to work comfortably in the situation was reiterated in 1919, when the Bush Church Aid Society formed in its own right and continues as the foundational principle today.

Currently, the Society supports ministers and workers in the Dioceses of Willochra, Northwest Australia, Northern Territory, North Queensland, Rockhampton, Armidale, Bathurst, Newcastle and Tasmania with Regional Offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. Those who currently staff these ministries were members or belonged to one of the following dioceses at the time of their placement as field or regional staff with the Society:

Diocese of Tasmania	2
Diocese of Melbourne	4
Diocese of Sydney	6
Diocese of Canberra/Goulburn	1
Diocese of Perth	2
Diocese of North West Australia	3
Diocese of Adelaide	2
Diocese of Brisbane	1
Diocese of Armidale	3
Diocese of Bathurst	1
Diocese of North Queensland	1
Diocese of Northern Territory	2

- ***Supply of Suitable Ministers***

The Society has, at times, had long-term vacancies in some situations while it has waited for the right person (e.g. Winton 18 months) but given the fact that the usual term is 4 years, the average yearly change over of personnel is about 6 or 7 per year. Finding suitable staff to fill vacancies is a constant ongoing task undertaken by the National Director and the Regional Officers.

Currently, the Society has one vacancy in Leigh Creek with Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy signifying moves later in the year.

The Society works closely with all Dioceses to assess and prepare potential candidates.

The Society's upgraded and formalised pastoral care network and support structures for serving field staff members (put in place over the past five years) has been refined and added to in this past year as a direct result of the introduction of Children Protection Legislation in July 2000.

The legislation has had a considerable flow on effect in the daily operation procedures and protocols of all organizations in ministry with children. This has a direct effect on the operational rules for the two School term Hostels at Forbes and Broken Hill.

All staff and volunteers, home based or in the field, together with all Council and committee members have been required to sign the appropriate declarations under the legislation

The strong pastoral care network and the well maintained support structures have given potential field staff confidence to make the move from a more settled and comfortable ministry to a BCA supported situation.

- * ***Finances***

The Society is currently in a healthy financial position. In 1998, the BCA Council acknowledged that it could not continue to draw on reserves at the level it had been for the past decade or more. (The annual draw downs from reserves over the decade ranged from \$150,000 to \$750,000 pa).

A strategy was set in place to reach a balanced budget situation by 2003. Current indications show that this is a feasible target, which will enable a small reserve fund to be maintained.

The average annual expenditure over the past five years has been \$2.1 mil.

- * ***Supporter & Home Base***

The Society enjoys the support of some 28,000 households across Australia. These are informed of the ministry activity and needs of the field via the quarterly mailings of the Real Australian and Prayer Notes and the two Appeal letters each year. The Regional Officers in each capital city keep local parishes informed through regular mission updates, deputations and special gatherings. The Regional committees, auxiliaries and volunteers given local expression to the broader National aims and objectives set in place by the National Council, Executive Committee and National Office.

- * ***Future Developments & Directions***

Ministry Training Assistance

Following a BCA sponsored mission team visit to the Diocese of Northwest Australia in 1997, two training positions were established for newly ordained clergy. This has been so successful that the Society sees this type of assistance as most valuable to developing a strong, young clergy base in rural and remote dioceses.

The Society plans to enable mission teams from Moore and Ridley Colleges to go to the Dioceses of Northwest Australia and Tasmania in 2001 and is hopeful of expanding the ministry training arrangements with other dioceses.

School term Student Hostels

The need for Hostels of the operational style currently provided by the Society over the past 80 years is in rapid decline. The Society has always promoted a high view of family life and cohesion and so applauds the educational and technical developments that allow many more young people to access quality education without having to live away from home in the care of others.

The Society plans to close the Hostel at Forbes in December 2001 and is closely assessing the situation in Broken Hill.

Ministry Development Officers

The emerging trend of forming "Ministering Communities" in many rural dioceses has highlighted the need for expert enablers to ensure the establishment and development of "Ministering Communities" on the best principles and structures. The Society is exploring the need to support and equip these enablers. It is currently in conversation with some dioceses to determine how best to respond to this emerging need.

Nurse Practitioner

The Society over the past twelve months has been working closely with the Diocese of the Northern Territory and its Anglicare agency, to bring about the provision of a clinic and nurse practitioner to provide dialysis services in the newly planned Aboriginal accommodation complex in Darwin. This complex will provide accommodation for people from communities seeking professional medical care and other assistance in Darwin.

As many have renal dialysis requirements, the Society is to provide this service on site by providing a nurse practitioner. It is planned that the renal dialysis clinic will come on line in temporary accommodation ahead of the new complex.

The Kirkby Foundation

Following the closure of the Bishop Kirkby Memorial Hospital at Cook 1998, a request from the family to continue the memory of Bishop Kirkby and a donation and legacy to be used in memory of SJ

*** In Conclusion**

The Society, its Council and staff are confident about the future given the current levels of support and encouragement across Australia and the opportunities being highlighted by dioceses for consideration.

The Society in its own right since 1919 and through its parent body since 1836 has sought to serve the Lord Jesus and the people of Australia through the Church and its Diocesan structures. In doing so, it has adapted its modes and methods to effectively minister in the culture and contexts of the day. It will continue to seek to offer appropriate ministry support maintaining the integrity of the Gospel in the ministry delivery.

Brian G. Roberts
National Director
March 2001