



**Annual Report
of
The Bush Church Aid Society of Australia
2003**

Year in Review 2003 was a year where the gains of the previous year were consolidated and new advances made in the process of keeping the Society's ministry initiatives apace with developments in the Dioceses across Australia. With a few Field Staff changes came opportunities to consolidate the partnership discussions commenced last year particularly with the Dioceses of Riverina and North West Australia.

The Council, through its National Director, Executive Committee, Regional Officers and Field Staff encouraged and monitored the increased partnership between the Society and the local congregations in the field, bringing more local ownership of the ministry and involvement in the gospel outreach.

The Society's plan to implement better partnerships with parishes and Dioceses receiving assistance and BCA supported ministry continued. Understanding in this area has grown and deepened with the Society launching a new model of ministry for Hillston and Ivanhoe in the Diocese of Riverina. The Society was successful in gaining a grant from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation to kick start this ministry.

The new partnership understanding with the Diocese of the North West moved forward. The National Director addressed the Diocesan Council and has now been invited to attend at least one of the two meetings of Diocesan Council each year. The Diocese has embraced the goal to be more strategic in resource placement. With the installation of their new Bishop the Rt. Rev. David Mulready (former State Secretary with the Society in NSW) has come a willingness to challenge and examine many of the existing practices and understandings.

Last year it was reported that *"The Society reworked the strategy of its goal of reaching a balanced budget, a position where the annual operational*

expenditure of the Society is covered by the normal income from donations and investments in any one year. The past practice of relying in part on bequests and other special income to fund the year to year operational expenditure had resulted in the shrinkage of the Society's investment portfolio. The Executive Committee signaled that it would be necessary to seek ways to minimize reliance on 'drawdowns' from the portfolio by 2004." It can now be reported that the Society has not made a draw down from the Portfolio during 2003 and at the 31st December 2003 the portfolios totalled at \$2,187,073. (It should be noted that by April 2004 the time of writing this report, the value had climbed to \$2,369,208)

Amongst the backdrop of routine ministry delivery two matters stood out as significant:

- **Rural Achiever's Award and the 2002/3 Drought**

In October, the Department of Lands & Rural Affairs awarded a Special Commendation to the BCA Drought Aid Programme for their services to the rural communities of NSW.

For the 13 months from September 2003 to October 2004 the Society provided drought aid assistance for isolated and rural families struggling with the ill effects of the worst drought in over 100 years. Through the provision of stock fodder and vouchers for use at local stores, the Drought Aid Programme sought to find the opportunity for personal support and counsel for distressed families.

The National Director, Brian Roberts, in accepting the award acknowledged the contribution of our supporters who together with our BCA Nomads enabled the Society to demonstrate God's love in very practical terms to these people. He also applauded the contribution of Trish Greenham (BCA Qld) for her tireless efforts in the organisation and delivery of the stock fodder.

Regrettably the BCA Drought Aid Programme was suspended and the last road train of stock fodder was delivered into Lightning Ridge on 9th October, 2003. The Society had always indicated that it would continue the fodder delivery until either the drought broke or the funds ran out, whichever came first. Unfortunately the funds were depleted, yet there remained many farmers in need across the Eastern states.

The result of the Drought Aid Programme has been a positive outreach to the individuals and communities involved. Rick Maude (Lightning Ridge, NSW) has had some very definite enquiries from people wanting to talk about Christianity and others who want to talk about "fine tuning their marriages". He is being kept busy following up people with whom he made contact through the fodder drops. Dennis Quinn (Winton, Qld) and Alan Hoskin (Broken Hill, NSW) have both been enabled to make contacts with many people only because of the Drought Aid Programme.

“It’s been so wonderful in bringing people together and we can’t believe you have been able to keep it going for so long” - comment from of a farming family when they heard the news of the last fodder drop.

The turnover of the BCA Drought Aid program amounted to ¾ million dollars, and

- q delivered over 200 semi-trailer loads of animal fodder
- q delivered to 21 different locations
- q assisted approximately 700 farming families
- q assisted local rural business communities through the supply of vouchers.

The cessation of the Drought Aid Programme does not necessarily mean that the Society will not undertake a further programme of this nature. Any future donations received for drought relief are now received through BCA’s Kirkby Trust (tax-deductible). The Trust will be in a position to assist communities and individuals throughout Australia who are suffering hardship, distress or misfortune caused by disasters.

Sidney James Kirkby was a pioneer of The Bush Church Aid Society and was concerned as much for the human situations isolated and remote people found themselves in, as he was with the spiritual. The Kirkby Trust was set up in his name to remember, honour and continue the benevolent work that Kirkby did amongst rural and isolated people in the remote parts of Australia in the 1920’s.

• **Re-connections with the Intercontinental Church Society**

The need for a gospel outreach in the 1830’s in Western Australia helped put mission on the agenda of a London based mission agency that was not only to carry a gospel work across Australia, but spawn The Bush Church Aid Society and plant bible based churches in many European centres.

The imperative was our Lord’s Great Commission and the mission agency was the West Australian Missionary Society, which was to become the Colonial and Continental Church Society (Col and Con) and continues today as the Intercontinental Church Society, ICS.

The Society hosted a visit from Rev. Canon Ian Watson CEO of ICS to see how it is now done in the field. Whilst Canon Watson was in Australia he addressed the Field Staff at the Field Staff Conference in Queensland as well as visiting western NSW and Tasmania. At the Field Staff Conference Ian Watson opened up some of the issues and possibilities for establishing healthy and vibrant congregations.

At the annual BCA Mission Address Ian reported on the changing faces for evangelism in Europe today. Whereas, in past years, Christian missionaries have helped to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus by 'going out into all the world with the good news', the situation is changing in Europe. Churches serving one nationality are increasingly rare – instead a modern international congregation might contain 55 nationalities, as Canon

Watson discovered when he became chaplain of Christ Church, Amsterdam.

New faces and different races abound in Europe. Globalisation and the increasingly widespread use of English have created new challenges and openings for the work of ICS, an evangelical Church of England mission agency. The world comes to Europe and the church in Europe needs to rediscover its evangelistic fervour and be the light of Christ to a postmodern, post-Christian age where a second European generation has been starved of Christian teaching. English-language ministry is playing an increasingly significant role in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in Europe.

Canon Watson concluded that Australia needs to also recover its evangelistic fervour in a context that is not that different to the UK and Europe.

This was also one of the considerations for a counterpart visit by the National Director to the UK and mainland Europe. ICS Ministry Centres, Chaplaincies and Staff were visited and the ICS Board Members contacted in an endeavour to open up relationships with a view to enhancing each Society's current ministries. The Society's Council are currently considering 6 outcomes from the visit which may add to the Society's ministry and effectiveness.

Staff movements 2003 represented a typical year as far as homebase and field staff stability was concerned. The changes gave opportunity to further refine the Society's candidature and pastoral care procedures. All those moving on from their ministries partook in 'end of service' reviews.

- **Comings: Field Staff**

Rev. Tom and Mrs. Muriel Slockee received the support of the Society. They have been active in ministry in Mogo at the Boomerang Centre on the NSW South Coast.

Rev. Chris and Mrs. Jenny Stafferton joined us as affiliate field staff in the rural parish of Latrobe in Tasmania.

Rev. Mark and Mrs. Joy Clayton who had responsibility for the Parish of the Tatiara came onto BCA field staff support in an arrangement with the Diocese to reach out to the Southern Mallee Towns of Lameroo, Pinaroo and Murrayville which are about 120 kms to the north of their parish.

Dr. Joy Sandefur took up the task of literacy work in Nungalinga College with a modified position description

Rev. Philip and Mrs. Lisa Southwell became the pioneers in a new partnership arrangement in Hillston. A dynamic partnership between the Diocese, Parish and Society seeks to avoid some of the paternalism and developing dependencies which have been in evidence in other settings. The position also includes responsibilities for some outlying areas including Ivanhoe.

- **Goings: Field Staff**

Rev. Steve and Mrs. Noni Wakeford in preparation for placement into a parish completed their Ministry Training Arrangement in Launceston moving from Longford.

A stint of some 12 years in the 'Top End' as Director of Anglicare came to a close during the year. **Mr. Peter & Mrs. Lynne Fisher** did a marvelous job of building up the Christian Care presence of the church and establishing the Anglicare ministry in the Diocese on a firm biblical foundation.

Rev. Joe and Mrs. Jeanette Sullivan resigned after a considerable time in Paraburdoo and Tom Price to take up the Parish of Cranbrook and Mt. Barker in the Diocese of Bunbury. During their time in the North West they witnessed considerable change to the patterns of mining town life and were able to offer helpful comment and reflection on the effects of mining company decisions on family and individual residents in both Paraburdoo and Tom Price.

It was with much disappointment that we were to learn that the **Rev. David and Mrs. Jenny Day** were to leave Derby, as a result of the withdrawal of the Bishop's license to minister.

The **Rev. Bob and Mrs. Denyse Rothwell** finished off their service with the Society in Kununurra from September with some health concerns. Bob and Denise had also served with the Society in Coober Pedy, a total of 10 years service during which Bob became Archdeacon for the Kimberley.

- **Regional and National Office Changes**

The Rev. Phillip and Mrs. Kathy Knife were accepted as Regional Officers in Western Australia, a part time honorary position. Philip and Kathy had served in Karratha for a number of years. The Knifes were able to take up the position without dislocating the arrangement because of the kind offer of **Rev. Raymond Molyneux** to extend his role as Regional Officer an extra few months. Raymond and Betty Lou have now retired from the Society having served in Newman and Broome prior to the part time position of Regional Officer.

Mrs. Olivia Chapman joined the National Office as part time accounts clerk.

The **Rev. Greg Jones** former field staff in the Parish of The Murchison based at Mt Magnet in the late 80's was appointed Regional Officer for Victoria and Tasmania

BCA Ministries Other matters highlighted for attention in 2003:

- **Coober Pedy celebrates 25 years**

The 25th anniversary of the Catacomb Church marked not only the years of the dugout church but also the many earlier years of BCA involvement where the Society had offered medical and spiritual ministry and support to the town and remote areas of South Australia. This was offered at first from a distance by itinerant clergy visits and through the Flying Medical Network, the establishment of a Bush Clinic with resident nurses, the building of the first hospital, then came the above ground Rectory and finally the digging of the Catacomb Church and underground Rectory.

Previous nursing staff and clergy attended the celebrations or sent messages of support and best wishes.

- **BCA go see it for yourself tours**

Easter in Lightning Ridge, North West Wild flower Tour and Tour Tasmania in Spring each afforded supporters in not only the opportunity to see the country in which BCA ministers but many first hand observations of ministry. The tours were each designed to allow supporters to meet with the BCA field staff and local parishioners and townspeople. Spectacular scenery and colourful ministry brought new and deepening appreciation of what the Lord is doing through the placement and support of ministry personnel in the field.

- **Women's Auxiliaries**

It was with much regret that the 'faithful remnant' of the NSW Women's Auxiliary reached the decision to 'close down' as a group after 72 years, although each of the ladies will continue individual support of the Society's ministry and mission to 'Win Australia for Christ'. The Annual 'Rally' this year had some 200 people attend. The Auxiliaries in Melbourne continue to find sufficient numbers of workers to provide support and revenue to the Society.

- **BCA Nomads**

Many supporters are adding value to their holidays and adding considerable input to the ministry and lives of the BCA Field Staff and their parishes through the BCA Nomad Programme. A register of some 64 couples now exists and are available to do a wide range of tasks to assist in the field. Building work, maintenance, computer advice and assistance, children's ministry, music ... the list is as varied as those who link up and serve in this special ministry capacity.

- **Archives**

Mr. Clem Kirkby has over the past decade assembled, sorted and catalogued all of the Society's archives. A small team of volunteers have assisted in the task of sorting and scanning important material to enable their safe storage in digital form. The recent additions to the photo archive is currently being catalogued and stored digitally.

- **Books and Sales Catalogue**

During the year the Society has continued to offer a postal sale catalogue as part of the Real Australian Magazine. The sales for the period have been constant with a turnover of some \$34,871. The Society has assisted staff and supporters of the Society by offering their books for sale. The titles include :

"Bush Preacher Bites the Dust" by Kerry Medway

"Bush Parson" by Leon Morris

"Hope on the Horizon" by Jocelyn Harvey

"We're Here Now so Make the Best of It" by Margaret Douglass

"The Meaning of Life" by Jeanette Fogarty

"Fox Tales from Far Flung Places" by Barbara Fox

"The Last Lessons"; "There are Flowers in the Desert"; "After the Desert" and "Unequally Yoked" by Audrey Aspelung

- **The Real Australian**

The magazine continues to attract positive comment and indications that it is very readable and is an effective communication tool with supporters. The current mailing arrangement allows for cost effective lodgment and postage of the magazine along with the prayer notes where requested to some 28,000 households and or individuals. In a church culture where traditional Sunday morning access to supporters is becoming more difficult as a result of Sunday attendance patterns and church service format the Real Australian magazine is providing an essential linkage and a means of mission information update.

The NSW Region currently has responsibility for the editing of the magazine with the National Office providing final proof checking, printing and lodgment.

- **The Prayer Notes**

The prayer notes continue to increase in popularity, with a 5% increase in reader/prayer numbers in 2003. It is clear from reports that the field staff understands the importance of a well-informed praying support base. The quarterly cycle of the notes allows reasonable lead-time for editorial deadlines and cost effective production while maintaining a fresh up to date presentation of matter for prayer. The Victorian Office prepares the Prayer Notes for final proof checking by the National Office. The notes are printed in Victoria.

- **Kirby Trust**

The Kirkby Trust was set up in mid 2002 for the provision of direct relief of sickness, suffering, distress misfortune, disability or helplessness in rural and regional areas of Australia in memory of the Society's first 'Organizing Missioner' S.J.Kirkby. Kirkby had a passion to meet the needs for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of the people who had taken up life in the more remote and rural areas. His early ministry initiatives were characterised by a strong desire to provide medical support to many while ministering to them in Christ's name. The fund is audited separately, has gift deductible recipient status with the Australian Taxation Office. The balance at the close of the year 2003 financial year was \$30,143.

- **Co-Workers Self Funded**

BCA Co-workers are men and women of God who are prepared to make themselves available on a self-funded basis to support the Society's ministry. They desire to make use of their ministry gifts for a limited period in some rural or remote region. Godly Christians who want to be involved in this way as supportive lay people who will work with and encourage outback ministries are a great asset to the serving Field Staff.

Geoff & Anne Thompson have been working in Broome for a couple of years and the new Seasonal Ministry Support Co-Workers, Michael Maude and John & Melva Watt will undertake a pilot ministry programme in one

of the Broome Tourist Parks. Their role will be to conduct ministry outreach among the many folk who flock to Broome in the winter months.

We also welcome David & Pam Hickingbotham from Melbourne who will be working in Karratha with Les & Jenny Gaulton.

Jim & Natalie Watson and Irfon & Barbara Griffiths have been approved to work in Kununurra and Tasmania. Both couples are waiting on the sale of properties before moving to the ministries that God has called them to in these areas.

- **The Regions and Mission Updates/Deputations**

The task of providing regular Mission updates is the responsibility of the Regional Officers. The five regions have this past year made significant advances in gathering extra prayer support, and a corresponding increase in donation support is in evidence. Some regions have well exceeded the budgeted predictions. During the year, it was noted in regional reports that access was gained to Parishes and groups, which in years past were not accepting of deputations from the Society.

Each of the Regions, with their Regional Officers have local committees, which focus the energy of supporters in the Regions. The increasing figures for support in the Regions may lead to a false conclusion about the health of local parishes in the cities and larger country towns. The anecdotal evidence from BCA deputationists is that numbers in most local churches are not increasing. That many are trying new and experiential forms of 'church' in order to maintain viability. If the 'parish church' continues to decline in number this will mean that the Society's current operational mode of relying on the local church to provide access to parishioners will need to be broadened.

The Regional Officers in addition to building improved supporter relations provide an invaluable task of seeking out people as potential Field Staff and assist the National Director in providing adequate pastoral care and reviews for the Field Staff.

In conclusion

The Society has been well served by those who have gone forward as ambassadors of Christ in the fellowship of the BCA family. The Homebase Staff, Councillors and Committee people have a strong sense of belonging to and assisting this work of the Gospel and calling the Church to become 'missional'. All within the Society realise the importance of having the redemption mandate foremost in all decision-making and clearly visible in the placement of personnel and resources. Many have been won for Christ and/or grown in the statute of our Lord in this past year and will continue in the years to come as a direct result of the Society's endeavours to serve its living Lord.

Brian G. Roberts
National Director