

 **wesley**

Easter 2020

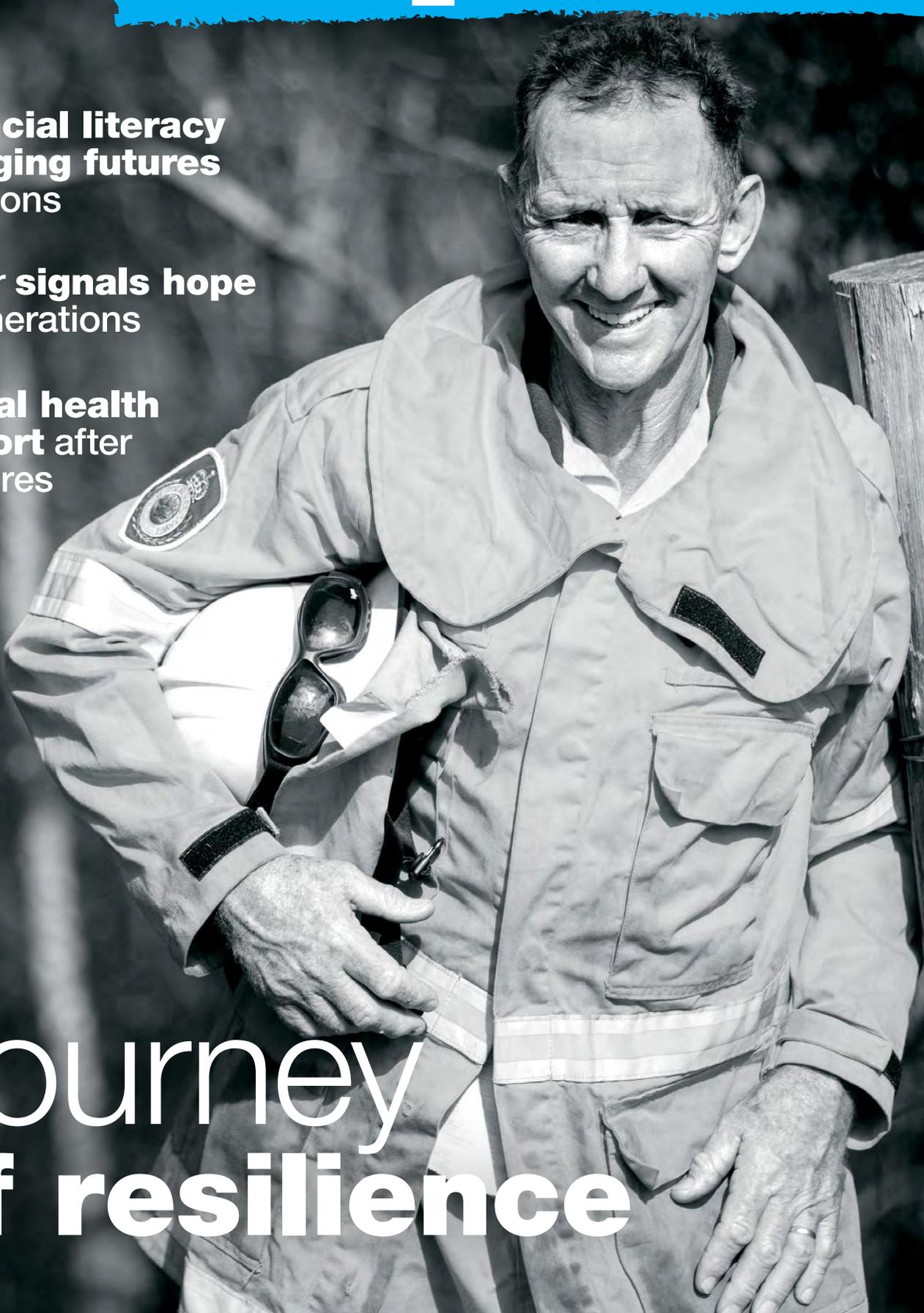
impact!



**Financial literacy
changing futures
in prisons**

**Easter signals hope
to generations**

**Mental health
support after
bushfires**



**Journey
of resilience**

wesley Easter 2020 Impact!

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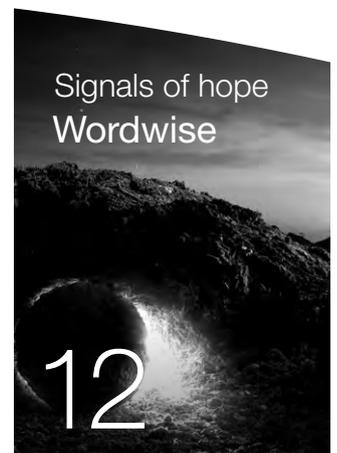
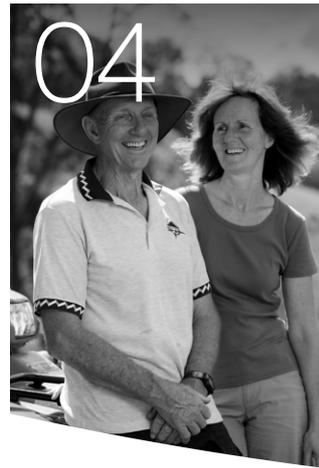
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“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.”

Acts 10:39-40



Hello

2020 has brought great challenges and change to communities across Australia and globally. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and our appropriate responses to it are changing our everyday routines in our homes, workplaces and in our congregations.

At Wesley Mission we have been examining carefully how we can best respond to people in need as measures to limit the spread of the virus increase.

Continuing to provide essential services to support people experiencing homelessness with crisis accommodation, calls to Lifeline Sydney and Sutherland, mums and their young children receiving mental health care and those in treatment in our mental health hospitals is paramount.

For many people a Wesley Mission service is their home, including residential aged care and retirement living, programs looking after young people exiting the foster care system, to vulnerable people in supported housing and people with disability.

This is not the time for our essential services to face closure, rather I am leading staff and volunteers to find suitable ways to continue supporting the people who rely on Wesley Mission and adhere to advice from public health agencies and medical professionals.

This issue of *Wesley Impact!* looks at some of the most challenging issues facing our Australian society. Our recent experience of bushfires exacerbated by years of drought along with concerning global weather events must contribute to an awareness that the world's climate is changing. Any long-term response to crises needs to include a focus on the mental health of our communities and suicide prevention.

Wesley Mission's award winning financial literacy program 'In Charge of My Money', which has brought financial freedom to many, is now bringing hope to people in prison. We hope this will help reduce repeat offending.

Another essential aspect of community at Wesley Mission is our diverse congregational life. This year we decided to mark Easter with the theme 'signals of hope', a message that is powerfully needed at this time when so many are fearful.

While our public Palm Sunday and Good Friday events will not be going ahead in the format that saw large crowds gathered at Sydney landmarks in previous years, we will continue with the Sunrise Service broadcast on Easter Sunday but no longer from the Sydney Opera House.

In this time when meeting in person is appropriately limited, the message of Easter is one that we will continue to share boldly with our community through digital and other creative means. Details for how you can connect during this meaningful time will be available on our website at wesleymission.org.au/easter

May we once again this Easter be changed by Christ's message and take up His call that gives us the strength we need today and hope for tomorrow.



Rev Keith V Garner AM
Superintendent/CEO
Wesley Mission

“May we once again this Easter be changed by Christ’s message and take up His call that gives us the strength we need today and hope for tomorrow.”





Fiery's journey of resilience
beyond smoke and ash

It was the longest 55-minute drive of Greg's life. But when his brigade finally arrived, their home village, Killabakh was on fire. And their fire truck was out of water.

It was 8 November 2019 and Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer, Greg and Killabakh RFS brigade were fighting a blaze in Bobin, west of Killabakh when they ran out of water.

While they waited for their water supplies to be replenished, they were suddenly called back to Killabakh, along the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. As they drove through, they met a horrifying site. Their village was engulfed by fire.

"I'd never watched a house burn until that day at Bobin. When we came over the hill [in Killabakh], everything was on fire. We've never seen that before," says Greg.

The stakes suddenly rose. For Greg and his brigade, this wasn't just any fire; they were now fighting to save the lives and homes of their community, their family and friends.

But there was little back up and only one fire truck available. They were it. No one else was coming.

"We didn't get much assistance from the RFS because there was so much going on in the whole of the Manning Valley. There was a region probably 40 kilometres wide and long that was just basically on fire. No one's got enough trucks for that."

Shortly after arriving home, Greg made the decision to save his own home – a decision he still wrestles with. After nine days fighting bushfires, nine homes from Killabakh were destroyed, including a friend's, who bravely assisted firefighters at the fire shed while her home was burning.

"The fire brigade is struggling with that because we all feel a sense of responsibility about the fact that we weren't able to save those houses," says Greg.

Greg and his wife Gabrielle own a 160-acre property. Together they defended their home from an inferno on their land. For four days they barely slept. Every hour Greg would wake and walk around his veranda to check the location of the fire.

"We've got a house right on a ridge and you can see the whole farm from there – a 360-degree view and we just watched the fire burn around us."

On the last night of the fire on their property, things took a turn for the worse; flames surrounded their farm, all exits were blocked and they were trapped. They moved their cattle to safety and armed with 1,000 litres of water, a fire pump and some long hoses, they prepared to fight the blaze.

"We watched the fire come down the northern ridge, back towards the cattle yards and we waited until it came to the road and then we spent about three hours putting it out."

As the flames escalated, Greg realised their fire hose wasn't long enough to reach the end of the fire.

"Gabrielle got on the quad bike and she went up to the house and she

threw the remaining three hoses on the seat of the quad bike, some really cumbersome big hoses, and came back in about six minutes."

By 10.30pm the fire approaching their cattle yards was out. But the crisis wasn't over. While they'd been extinguishing the fire, their fences and bush near their shed full of farming equipment had been burning unchecked for two hours.

"A nice stack of fence posts we purchased just recently for new fencing, were all on fire," Greg sadly reflects.

By 3am it was finally over. Their land was scorched and many fences destroyed but thankfully, they'd managed to save their cattle, shed and farming tools. While exhausted from non-stop firefighting, Gabrielle was still thinking of her neighbours, so they hopped on their quad bike to check on their friends.

While a traumatic experience for Greg and Gabrielle, sadly the bushfires are just the latest in a series of disasters. For the last two years their community has faced drought.



Wesley LifeForce Community Development Coordinators Amy (far left) and Jocelyn (far right) with Greg and Gabrielle on their farm.

“...we just watched the fire burn around us.”



Greg and Gabrielle's farm in Killabakh is located 21 kilometres west of Taree.

“It’s one thing to watch your property shrivel from the drought and then another to watch it burn,” says Greg.

The lack of rain has led to dry, barren land, resulting in little to no feed left for their cattle. Twice a day, Greg and Gabrielle hand-feed their cattle. And they’re struggling to maintain it.

“Their (cattle) grocery bill is way above ours. We spend most of our money on cattle feed. We thought, if we can just get a wet break, the paddocks will come back. Well, most of those paddocks got burnt from the fires.”

Clean up is still in motion in Killabakh, along with plans to rebuild. But beyond the physical damage, many people are left with scars and trauma from the devastating bushfires.

“People are frozen and not able to prioritise, me included. I can see that some people are at a point where they don’t really know how to solve things,” explains Greg.

“The mental health toll of an incident like this on a community is almost like a simmering disaster itself.”

Greg is a member of Wesley LifeForce Manning Suicide Prevention Network,

based in Taree. The network brings together community members and local organisations to create awareness about suicide and develop community-led suicide prevention strategies at a grassroots level.

Greg first joined the network after losing a friend to suicide. “That really shocked us. We’re a tight, vibrant community so we were all just flopped because we weren’t ready for it. And I say that knowing that you’re never ready for that sort of event.”

Wesley LifeForce Community Development Coordinator, Amy says in addition to practical help, mental health support is crucial to long-term recovery in the region.



Gabrielle stands in an empty dam on her property in Killabakh, a result of a two-year drought.

“About post six weeks after a disaster, suicide risk is a lot higher,” explains Amy. “Going through disasters like these, trauma lasts for a long time and people respond to trauma in different ways.

“People still have the memory of the smoke, losing their home or losing a loved one. That’s why it’s really important for us to be in communities providing ongoing mental health support.”

Wesley LifeForce Manning Suicide Prevention Network is currently planning how to support communities in the Manning Valley, including Killabakh along their journey towards recovery.

“The network is still navigating the best ways to support their community ongoing. Rather than reacting quickly, we’re listening to what the community needs and asking them what they want to have as a helpful response,” explains Amy.

“This is long-term. It’s about looking at sustainable long-term support and solutions for communities like Killabakh.” **||**

Drought and fire affected communities come together to develop suicide prevention strategies

In October 2019, Wesley LifeForce brought together leaders from suicide prevention networks, including 38 communities that had been affected by drought, for a two-day conference to share effective local strategies. Through a survey of network members and in consultation with leaders in drought affected communities, a report was produced that was provided to the National Mental Health Commission.

Since the conference, record-breaking temperatures and years of drought fuelled more than a hundred bushfires across Australia. Almost 16 million hectares of bush, land and forest were burned, and over 3,500 homes lost.

“Having 108 Wesley LifeForce Networks across Australia provides a unique opportunity to listen to the voices of local communities and to be able to give voice to their concerns. I’m conscious that we are moving into a new phase of climate for the world that will require us to come together in new ways,” said Wesley Mission CEO, the Rev Keith Garner.

Wesley LifeForce Networks affected by drought, fire and now some by damaging hail and rain have met in a series of roundtable discussions in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia to share local perspectives and to develop strategies.

Wendi from Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Network described the devastating impact that fires have had across the region, “Shoalhaven has 49 towns and villages and more than 70 per cent has been burnt. It impacts every school, workplace, business... it is really hard to find someone who hasn’t been impacted to reach out to for support.”

A common theme at each of the roundtable discussions was the long-term health of the community and research shows that networks are right to be concerned. ‘Beyond Bushfires’, a six-year study conducted by the University of Melbourne into the mental health and resilience of 1,000 community members following the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria demonstrated the extended impacts on the mental health of some individuals.

“At five years post-bushfires, 22 per cent of people in high impact communities were reporting symptoms of mental health disorders at approximately twice the rate evident in low impact communities and what would be expected in the general population. In addition, some people experienced delayed onset of mental illness such as post-traumatic stress disorder at the five-year mark,” said Mr Garner.

“Along with the financial support announced by the Australian Government and measures to help address the emotional and psychological impacts of the bushfires, longer term planning will be needed to support ongoing recovery. Wesley LifeForce Networks can play a critical role to connect the community to the available supports.”

Practical strategies to build resilience and aid recovery include targeted suicide prevention training to be delivered to affected communities, hosting non-clinical support groups for people who are reluctant to access help and increased engagement with Primary Health Networks to help bridge community needs and available resources.

“The recovery effort is not over, in fact it has only just begun. Wesley Mission’s longstanding relationships in communities are critical as we support our networks to respond to crises. We must rally together and find strength in each other for the long and difficult road ahead,” said Mr Garner. ■

Responding to the problem of suicide in Australian communities

Over the last ten years, Australian communities have experienced an increase in the rate of suicide. In 2018, there were 105,730 years of life lost to suicide, stealing more years from our friends and families than any other cause of death.

With a presence in every state, focusing on areas where the problem of suicide hits the hardest, Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Networks are community-led working groups addressing suicide at a local level.

So far, there are 108 groups in communities across Australia representing a membership of more than 2,664 people including groups in rural and remote areas and groups led by young and First Nations people. New networks are being established every year through the support of the Commonwealth Government and Primary Health Networks.

Established in 1995, Wesley LifeForce is a national program providing suicide prevention services that educate and empower local communities, supporting people most at risk. More than 40,000 people have been trained through the program in this time. ■



SHORTLAND
CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

Wesley Financial
Literacy and HIPU
trainers, Moira
and Bob.

'You're the boss'

prison inmates
take charge of
their money



The first time Sam walked into a prison, all eyes were on him. He was the outsider. And it was intimidating.

He's been heckled, screamed at and he admits to feeling nervous.

"The first few times there were a few scary moments. But I think in those moments God gives you the grace to be there," says Sam.

"Sometimes you'll be in uncomfortable situations, but you just keep moving. You push forward, move forward and point forward. Because if you just stop there, then you'll fall apart."

Sam now stands tall. His confidence comes from his deep-rooted faith. He has a new perspective he says. He has God's perspective.

"I see people. People who have been in really hard circumstances," he pauses.

"You know we all need hope. And we all need a Saviour. I love the fact that our program gives hope. And I love the idea that we're not giving them one dimensional hope.

"We're not just concerned about your finances, but we think holistically about how we can help you – and I think that's what Wesley Mission is all about."

At seven correctional centres, Wesley Mission's Strategic Relationships Manager, Sam and his team of 15 are providing hope to prison inmates through High Intensity Program Units (HIPU) – a financial literacy program funded by the Department of Justice, Corrective Services NSW.

Since February 2019, 735 inmates have attended Wesley Mission's 'In Charge of My Money' – a program which has helped vulnerable Australians manage their money and avoid debt since 2011. HIPU aims to reduce and break the cycle of re-offending in New South Wales.

"When I speak to inmates during the breaks, you realise that in a lot of offending that occurs, there's an element of finances and money," explains Sam.

"Financial stress, relationship stress, mental stress and emotional stress. And if you're not on top of it, if you're not in charge of your money and your money's in charge of you, that's another stress."

Mid North Coast prison inmate and HIPU participant Adele shares her struggle with reoffending. "I've been in [prison] three times last year and this year because I get out and I've got nothing and I've got to try and deal with a mortgage and children... with no support at all. So I just keep going back because it's too easy."

So when the prospect arose for Wesley Mission to be part of HIPU, Sam jumped at the opportunity.

"I've always had a passion for working within corrections. Although my job is to find partnerships, sometimes you find partnerships you feel passionate about that are compatible with Wesley Mission and with what the community wants."

HIPU is a unique program. Purpose-built, standalone and self-contained training facilities are fitted for each correctional centre. Ranging from minimum to maximum security correctional centres, Sam says our trainers must be prepared for anything. Working in teams of two, adapting to a new environment becomes second nature.

"In Cessnock, which is a violent offenders' unit, we have to walk through multiple layers of doors to get to where we need to go," Sam explains.

Wesley Financial Literacy and HIPU Trainer Educator Jacqui continues, "It's a different training environment. Usually we teach using PowerPoint but in prison we use printed visual aids. You've got to make sure that everything that goes in, needs to come out. Even things like calculators. We wear duress alarms when we are there."

Our HIPU trainers quickly realised traditional teaching styles wouldn't work in this environment. So they adjusted.

"We're here to come alongside, not to teach," says Sam. "Everybody's sitting in a circle or semi-circle. We open up the conversation. We get a lot of inmates to write on the board and we empower them to come up with ideas."

To help the inmates relax in their learning environment, our HIPU trainers don't wear a uniform.

"We come in representing the community that are wanting to help and that actually goes a long way for the inmates. Especially when they're in an environment where everyone's wearing a uniform. It's very controlled. Then we come in there as a sign that things can change when you come out of prison."

And for each correctional centre, the course content for Wesley Mission's In Charge of My Money has been altered to suit the different needs of inmates.

Adaptation is key to the success of HIPU. Many inmates feel disempowered says Sam. They feel they've lost control over their lives and have no hope for the future. "Some have even said, 'I've hit the bottom, and this is it'."

So instead of teaching a financial literacy course, Sam's team are

showing inmates how to be 'the boss of their money' – a phrase that strongly resonates.

"The term 'financial literacy' sounds very formal, but when you offer people a chance to be 'the boss of their money', they are all ears," says Jacqui.

For Sam, it's about empowering inmates to take charge and ownership of their future decisions.

"We're there to explore positive money behaviours. Get them to pick one positive money behaviour that resonates with them. And you can see which one actually hits the mark with them. We feel joy when we see that."

And they're seeing attitudes shift from despair to hope. "We had one inmate come up to us and thank us for helping another inmate," explains Sam. "He said, 'He's never said a word while he's been in here. So you've cracked him open'."

To help inmates break the re-offending cycle, the program identifies debt traps and offers safe financial support through Wesley Financial Counsellors.

"There are a lot of places you can go if you're having trouble with money, but not all the places have your best interests or your growth at heart. We can hand on heart tell them our services have your good at heart," says Sam.

And it's not just influencing the prison inmates. "Not only are they taking that

knowledge themselves, but they're passing it to family – people who are significant to them," explains Sam.

Two or three months after Jacqui delivered a program, a guy called out from the yard saying, 'Oi miss. I got my missus to call a financial counsellor'.

While Sam and his team have experienced the unexpected, nothing surprised them more than the inmates' reaction to their financial resource pack.

"We can hand on heart tell them our services have your good at heart."

Nicknamed 'The blue folder' program by prison inmates, every course participant is given a Wesley Mission branded cyan pack with financial literacy resources.

"It's a blue folder. You'd probably throw a blue folder in your recycling can. But it represents the outside. And the blue folder is yours. You can write your name on the blue folder," shares Sam.

"We've had inmates try to sneak themselves in a second time to get a second blue folder," laughs Sam.

At the end of course, inmates are given a certificate. For many, the certificate represents steps towards the future.

"A lot of them love the certificate because it's a sign of positive achievement," says Sam.

For Sam, HIPU has opened the door to not only share important life skills but has kindled his passion to explore prison chaplaincy.

"They are people. They are equally made in the image of God. And we all have struggles. And the struggles that they have are unique to the struggles that I have. But they're still struggles that require hope and intervention. And it's a privilege to be part of a little bit of that." ■



Nicknamed 'The blue folder' program, prison inmates value Wesley Mission's branded cyan financial literacy resources pack they receive at the course.



Easter Mission: a message of hope through generations

At the heart of the Christian faith lies Easter. For all Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most pivotal and potent events that have ever taken place. The message of Easter echoes through the centuries bringing hope, new life and salvation to generations.

Easter has always been a prominent part of the worship life of Wesley Mission. In 1959, former Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Alan Walker established a week-long festival of events called Easter Mission. In 2020, we give thanks that this significant Christian witness not only continues but is amplified as Sydney landmarks again provide the stage for the message of Easter.



A long history of hope

Easter Sunday, the most significant day in the Christian calendar, took a new direction at Wesley Mission when in 1961 Walker launched a national televised Easter Sunrise Service, at a time when television in

Australia was only five years old.

On that 1961 Easter Sunday morning at 7am, standing on a seven-metre-high platform erected in front of the huge screen at the Ryde Drive-in Theatre, Mr Walker addressed 3,000 people in 700 cars, as well as tens of thousands of people sitting in front of black and white television sets in their homes:

“I bring you today the greatest news that has ever fallen on human ears: Jesus Christ is risen.”

Each Easter Sunday morning Wesley Mission continues to bring this great news to the people of Australia at the Easter Sunrise Service, broadcast live from the Sydney Opera House. Over the years the service has featured many performers, special guests and continues to impart an Easter message relevant for its time.



It's been an important event in the calendar for each of the last three Superintendents. Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Keith Garner says, “It is vital that Wesley Mission is able to share the good news of the gospel from such an Australian icon on the most important day of the year.”

It's hard to measure the fruit from more than 60 years of telling the Easter story, but the reach of Wesley Mission's Easter Mission led historian Don Wright to comment:

“It is difficult to imagine how a single church could have gained more attention and made more impact on its host community...” ■

Easter 2020

This year holds a special significance as Wesley Mission CEO and Superintendent, the Rev Keith V Garner AM announced that he will retire from this role in January 2021. Under his leadership, the message of Easter told from the streets of Sydney has connected with countless people across the globe through broadcast, livestream and social media.

The Rev Keith Garner's efforts to reach more people using digital and other creative means demonstrate his strategic leadership, which are essential as we respond to increasing measures to limit the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Amidst the fear we're witnessing on a global scale, the living hope we receive through life in Jesus Christ stands out as remarkable good news in our current climate. This year, the ways that we journey through this significant time will look different but draw us once again to the timeless message of Easter.

For Easter 2020, we have chosen the theme 'signals of hope'. As we view the gospel accounts, these indications give us confidence to place our faith in Jesus, especially when life is hard.

We're appropriately responding to medical advice which will see our Easter celebrations change this year. "Our public events may not be going ahead in their usual format, but the message of hope we receive at Easter is needed now more than ever," said the Rev Keith Garner.

[Join us as we journey towards Easter](#)

[Palm Sunday and Good Friday](#)

For revised information visit wesleymission.org.au/easter



The Rev Keith Garner and YouTube sensation Jayesslee who will be part of the 2020 Easter Sunday broadcast.

Easter Sunday broadcast

The dawn breaks and hope is alive as we welcome Easter. We welcome people everywhere in their homes to join in the celebration by watching Channel 9, listening to Hope 103.2 or viewing the livestream on Wesley Mission's Facebook page and at wesleymission.org.au

Many people say that it doesn't feel like Easter Sunday until the Rev Keith Garner has greeted them with the acclamation, 'Christ is Risen!' to which we all respond, 'He is Risen Indeed!'

We're living through challenging times, we need to be generous, show compassion and offer the hope of Christ to people most in need – that's community at its best.

A special prayer as we respond to the Coronavirus

Merciful God, listen to our prayers as we offer them in the light of this very difficult situation. Empower those who have medical skills to find an appropriate vaccine, guide those who have medical responsibilities in our nation and across the world and give to us all wisdom in our responses.

May we shine more brightly and share more boldly the good news of Christ, as we act in radical generosity, unconditional love and faith-filled hope. Let us join our hands together and respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ■

Signals of hope

Acts 10:39-40

For Christians all over the world, Easter comes not a day too soon. Here in Australia, we have lived through the scorching heat of summer and the floods which followed have left many experiencing loss in a variety of ways. We hope fire and flood will now give way to calmer days. In the northern hemisphere, Easter helps people to prepare for the hope of brighter, better days following the dark winter months. Easter speaks of hope through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The reality of His risen presence is the greatest message ever given to human beings to declare to whoever will listen.

In one of his splendid books on the resurrection, George Eldon Ladd summed up the Easter message in this way: "This remains fundamental to Christian faith today."¹

[Acts 10:39-40](#)

"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen."

I want to examine this message of Easter as offering to us wonderful signals of hope:

[A signal of the joyous realisation that Easter is good news](#)

The story was told of a well-known

preacher who was busy preparing for his Easter day sermon. He examined his bookshelves to find inspiration; he consulted his text books in the hope that something fresh might emerge, but he was suddenly confronted with an amazing revelation that caused him to exclaim: "He is alive! Christ is risen!" Resurrection had now become something deeply personal to him in a new and quite dramatic way.

In Acts 10, we read how Peter travelled to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion who had been stirred by a vision that led him to call for Peter. It could be argued that Peter arrived at one of the most eager of congregations. As the people were gathered, anticipating the message they were about to hear, Cornelius said to Peter, "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

John Stott, in his commentary on Acts, concludes his reflection on this passage: "The life, death and resurrection of Jesus were more than significant events; they also constituted the gospel... But the scope of the gospel was universal."²

As we gather on Easter morning at the Sydney Opera House as part of our Easter Mission, the Sunrise Service is the climax of a week of activities that reminded us of the journey of Jesus Christ to the cross. But on Easter day,

we shall be filled with the joyous realisation that Christ is alive!

[A signal of the eagerness that fills Christians with hope](#)

As Peter spoke to the crowd that was gathered, he would realise that those listening to his words were hearing something that was new, which would bring meaning into their lives in a quite remarkable way.

Naturally, Peter would speak of the events of the cross, but this must never be the conclusion of the message. We shall use the symbol of the cross at our Good Friday witness at Martin Place in the heart of Sydney, but it points to something much deeper. The Christian message becomes but an introduction to a wonderful encounter with the risen Lord. There must have been many who were ready to reject the message that Peter brought. John Vipond, a former military chaplain, was very direct when he said, "The preaching of the cross, if it stops there, is foolishness. That is not the gospel of Christ. Although Paul said, 'We preach Christ crucified...' he did not stop there; nor did Peter. It was not the full gospel."³

This thought resonates with the words of Paul, written to the Corinthians in what could arguably be the earliest account of the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, we have a striking and important account of the

risen Lord appearing to Cephas, then to the Twelve and then to an even larger crowd on one occasion. Like many others preaching the gospel on Easter day, I will turn to the gospels but, when I read these words of Paul, it is clear to me that he (like Peter) sees that resurrection is fundamentally a message of hope. In these challenging days, we need to hear the message of hope more than ever before. It is this hope that fills the Christian community in every age with an eagerness to reach out to others.

A signal that points to the heart of our message

In this wonderful sermon, Peter points not only to what Jesus said, but also how he lived. Nothing could be clearer than his affirmation that Jesus went around doing good and healing all who needed his help. Peter was speaking of what he had observed. His sermon includes a résumé of Jesus' life and work during his earthly ministry. He could have assumed that in his audience were many who knew something of the detailed account he shared. It is likely that we have only a summary of what Peter said and he may have expounded on examples from Jesus' ministry.

Richard N Longenecker reminds us, "Peter ends his sermon by stating that the risen Christ has commanded his apostles to preach 'to the people' and to testify about his divine appointment as 'judge of the living and the dead'." ⁴

At Wesley Mission, we concentrate a good deal on the wholeness of the message of Jesus Christ, which includes reaching out to people in their need. But we are reminded that at the heart of all we do is a message to be declared to others: that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. In over forty years of ministry, this has remained the constant focus of everything I have sought to preach.

A signal of the conviction of Christian people

I wonder if those who gathered to listen to the message of the Apostle would realise that very soon this would become their message too. The gospels record different descriptions of the resurrection. They are worked together editorially into a narrative which demonstrates consistency and a sound understanding of what took place. The account in Acts is chronologically connected and gives us an insight into the thinking of the early church. This will become a dynamic conviction amongst the people who were members of the very first churches.

I counted the late Howard Marshall a friend. He was a fine New Testament scholar, who spent a significant period as Professor of New Testament Theology at Aberdeen University. In his magnificent work *New Testament Theology*, he drew attention to the fact that Peter spoke about the earthly ministry of Jesus when he was referring to the resurrection.⁵ Everything is held together and Easter becomes the great conviction of the Christian community.

Easter hope reminds us that there is a solid foundation upon which to build our lives. There are many examples of false hopes presented to us today. We can, however, be certain of the future because of what has happened in the past in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This leads us to the conviction that Easter is something we not only believe in, but also place our hope upon and receive into our experience today.

Among my Easter thoughts is an illustration from a visit that I made (and you too could make) to a graveyard in Derbyshire in England. I spent two years at Cliff College in Derbyshire and, during that time, I preached in many churches in the towns and villages.

There is a fascinating tombstone to be found in a cemetery at the heart of

the former mining community of Bolsover. It reads:

Here lies in a horizontal position
the outside case of
Thomas Hinde, Clock and
Watchmaker,
who departed this life wound up
in the hope of being taken in hand
by his Maker
and being thoroughly cleaned,
repaired and set a-going
in the world to come.

This is exactly what God can do beyond this world, as we offer our lives to him.

The story is told of a medieval king who gave his new court jester a fool's sceptre and told him to keep it until he met a bigger fool than himself. Years later, the king lay dying and sent for the jester. He told him, "I am going on a long journey."

"Where are you going and how will you travel?" asked the jester.
"I don't know," replied the king.
"Have you made any provision for the journey, Your Majesty?"
"No," replied the king.

The jester handed the king his fool's sceptre. "Then this belongs to you!" ⁶

Are you genuinely prepared for the fact that we do not live forever? In all our work and witness at Wesley Mission, the core of our message is the offer of good news that resurrection life is not the preserve of the few but is open to all who would receive the message of the risen Christ. Open to you!

Rev Keith V Garner AM 

1. Ladd, George Eldon, I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, Hodder & Stoughton, p.149
2. Stott, John R W, The Message of Acts, IVP, p.191
3. Vipond, John, Preaching for All Seasons, Mowbray, p.52
4. Longenecker, Richard N, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9, Regency Reference Library, p.393
5. Marshall, I Howard, New Testament Theology, IVP Academic, p.192
6. Beasley-Murray, Paul, The Message of the Resurrection, IVP, p.193

Welcome

to the
Aboriginal
Lands

of
Kokodu
NATIONAL PARK



Indigenous young women discover their roots

Wesley Youth Hope recently chaperoned a trip to the Northern Territory to encourage young Indigenous women to connect with their culture.

Known as the 'Girls Deadly Cultural Connection Camp', eight young women travelled from Sydney to Indigenous parks, lands, art sites and communities to learn significant cultural connections to the land, discover how Aboriginal people lived in past generations, eat traditional foods and develop new skills such as basket weaving.

"This camp has connected me with my culture through art and learning about traditional foods. Learning about eating off the land and only using what you need," said one camper. ■

Giving children and young people a voice

It's been two years since the final report was handed down from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The recommendations from this report highlighted the need to listen to the voices of children and young people; to allow them to participate in decisions affecting them; and to involve them in the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives that keep them safe.

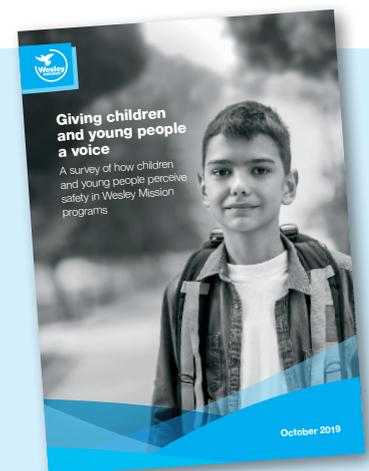
At Wesley Mission we sought to do that by inviting 164 children and young people in our programs, between the ages of 10 and 17, to provide feedback on their safety, when engaging with Wesley Mission.

This research conducted by the Institute of Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University

found that most of the young people surveyed in our programs felt safe either 'all of the time' (76.2 per cent) or 'most of the time' (20.1 per cent).

We learned that in order to feel safe, young people wanted a trusted adult they could approach if they felt uncomfortable. Through their feedback, these young people told us that we need to identify better ways for children to report safety concerns, and to look for more accessible and child-friendly ways for them to raise issues.

This will be the first in an ongoing exercise to monitor our engagement and find ways to give children and young people more of a voice in how they're supported. With more than 120 years' experience caring for children and young people, it's our responsibility to do all we can to safeguard their bright futures. ■



76.2%

feel safe in our programs
all of the time

20.1%

feel safe in our programs
most of the time



Official reopening announces the next step for Newcastle

On Tuesday 3 March, Wesley Mission CEO, the Rev Keith V Garner AM along with Lord Mayor of Newcastle and special guests gathered to officially reopen the completely refurbished building at 15 Denison Street, Newcastle West. The event also marked the expansion of a new approach to personalised assistance, making it even easier for locals in need to access support from Wesley Mission’s broad range of services.

seniors, Wesley Mission Newcastle will act as a first point of contact to more than 120 of Wesley Mission’s programs including referrals to local community providers to best meet the diverse needs of the region.

“Our refurbished hub demonstrates Wesley Mission’s continued commitment to the region and to providing a network of support that extends beyond Newcastle to Lake Macquarie and the Hunter,” said Mr Garner.

20 years. Many people know us for homeless services, but we also offer education, training and employment, counselling, mental health and wellbeing support, along with foster care amongst a wide range of other programs.”

“Anyone who needs help can come in and speak to a person who will listen. We want to make sure that each person receives support and knows their next step. Many people might have complex needs but taking the first step is crucial, reinforced by Wesley Mission’s commitment to walk alongside every person, no matter how long the journey,” said Mr Garner. ■

“Wesley Mission has been serving the Newcastle community for more than

Delivering tailored support for children, young people, adults and

Easter Sunday broadcast

Watch the broadcast with the Rev Keith V Garner AM

6am – Channel 9 broadcast across Australia, listen to Hope 103.2 or view the livestream on Wesley Mission’s Facebook page and at wesleymission.org.au





Revitalisation of Glebe property to help tackle affordable housing crisis

Wesley Mission has lodged a Development Application that proposes the complete refurbishment of one of its existing properties, Wesley RJ Williams, located at 274 Glebe Point Road. The planned upgrade is in direct response to the demand for affordable rental housing across Sydney and would feature 74 self-contained apartments, including a mix of studios and four-bedroom configurations.

“In a practical, day-to-day sense, the main change will be that the building will once again ‘come to life’ with new vitality,” said Wesley Mission CEO, the Rev Keith Garner.

“Despite a clear drive to see Wesley RJ Williams utilised in a way that fits with the Wesley Mission ethos to support people in need, we have not been able to do this until now.

“Redeveloping a site such as this requires significant capital and a well-planned solution. Thanks to the generosity of Wesley Mission supporters, we have been able to move ahead with revisiting plans for the site.”

Aimed at moderate-to-low income households, affordable housing is priced at least 25 per cent below market rate to help tenants balance rent with other living costs such as food, clothing and utilities.

“We would expect Wesley RJ Williams to become home to many different people. They may include a host of people, such as child care workers, hospital workers or those recovering from an illness, as well as families in need of secure accommodation or single women 55 and over who may find themselves in difficulty due to changes in life circumstances such as illness or loss of a partner.”

To learn more about Wesley RJ Williams please visit: wesleymission.org.au/wesley-rj-williams ■

To help address the housing affordability crisis, the City of Sydney has established an ambitious target of 7.5 per cent of all city housing to be affordable housing, delivered by not-for-profit or other providers.



Artist's impression

John Wesley's 44 sermons inspire twenty-first century application

Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Keith Garner will preach a number of sermons inspired by evangelist and founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley's renowned 44 sermons. Beyond being the 'Wesley' family for which Wesley Mission is named, these eighteenth-century sermons have a lot to offer as we consider how we're called to live as Christians in the twenty-first century.

Interpreted across the generations, the sermons offer a plain-spoken and lasting call to strong faith in a loving God and practically demonstrating that love to all around us.



The series will see the Rev Keith Garner welcomed at churches and gatherings across New South Wales with the opportunity to learn more about the important project to redevelop the Wesley Edward Eagar Centre, as vital crisis accommodation for people experiencing homelessness.

This facility began its life as a Wesleyan Chapel in 1847, before being converted to provide refuge to women and men in 1979, a building in which both of its lives wonderfully reflects Wesley Mission's own theological convictions and the Word and deed approach that inspires Wesley Mission today.

To welcome the Rev Keith Garner to your congregation to deliver a sermon from this series, contact ian.ferguson@wesleymission.org.au ■



Did you know more than

116,000
Australians

are experiencing
homelessness every night?

Critical upgrade to homeless accommodation unites community

Each year, increasing numbers of women and men are experiencing homelessness and are seeking help from Wesley Mission. Our crisis accommodation facility Wesley Edward Eagar Centre in Surry Hills remains largely unaltered since the 1970s and is now no longer fit for purpose.

The Rev Keith V Garner AM, along with former Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard OM AC have launched

an appeal to completely redevelop this critical facility. Responding to this call, individuals, organisations and congregations have begun to donate funds, host events and have joined in prayer for this project. Large or small, each contribution brings us a step closer and we would like to thank everyone who has helped to raise \$861,744 to date.

The next month represents a critical phase in this project as we finalise

alternate accommodation, host fundraising events and begin the construction that will transform the existing building to better meet the needs of women and men experiencing homelessness in Sydney.

The City of Sydney has awarded a million dollar grant toward the refurbishment from its Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund. Lord Mayor Clover Moore said providing access to safe and secure housing was critical to ensure Sydney delivers opportunities for all.

To learn how you can help to end homelessness in Sydney visit wesleymission.org.au/wesley-edward-eagar-centre-redevelopment or call 1800 021 021. ■

New minister welcomed to Wesley Chinese Congregation



The Rev Jonathan Chen, the new minister for Wesley Chinese Congregation was officially inducted on Sunday 23 February.

Prior to the service, Mr Chen, alongside his wife Renee and their children Ian and Angelina, took up his new role and were welcomed by their new congregation at the start of February.

For the last 10 years, Mr Chen has worked as an Anglican minister, including seven years at St John's Anglican Church in Parramatta and then three years at Cabramatta Anglican Church.

Mr Chen's heart for practical mission was sparked when he was invited to speak at Wesley Chinese

Congregation's family camp two years ago.

"The past 10 years in the Anglican Church, my ministry became a routine. So I prayed to God for a possibility to explore the mission area. I think mission is God's ultimate purpose. So I prayed and God opened this door."

Passionate about Wesley Mission's Word and deed mission, Mr Chen is excited for new opportunities where his congregation can put their faith into action.

"We are part of a wider Wesley Mission – we have different congregations and different social services. So we're looking for opportunities where we can serve across all our ministry areas." ■

"I think mission
is God's ultimate
purpose."

Bushfire victims turn to Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland for support



Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland, as part of Lifeline Australia, have received an increase in calls over the 2019–20 holiday season due to the national bushfires, which have burnt through almost 16 million hectares, destroyed over 3,500 homes and 33 people lost their lives.

“As more and more Australians struggle with the devastation of these bushfires, we face a challenging period ahead and expect a further increase in calls,” said Wesley Mission CEO and Superintendent the Rev Keith Garner.

Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland takes calls from across Australia and volunteer Crisis Supporters have

reported an influx in conversations about the bushfire crisis.

“We have experienced callers discussing how horrible the fires are and how the situation is contributing to their distress over the last month. In the last week, we have seen an increase in callers whose primary focus of the call/crisis is directly related to bushfires,” explained Edward, Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland Manager.

Volunteer Crisis Supporters have committed to additional shifts to answer the increase in calls.

“Volunteers are playing a significant role in responding to bushfires across

“...we face a challenging period ahead and expect a further increase in calls.”

our country, from the dedication and service shown by thousands of local community members of the Rural Fire Service to people answering crisis calls at services like Lifeline. We see the very best of the Australian spirit demonstrated in these challenging conditions,” said Mr Garner.

Your donation will help us do more in local communities by providing crisis and long-term support to individuals and families affected by the bushfires.

To donate, visit wesleymission.org.au/bushfire-donation-2020. ■

Help save lives

Become a Lifeline Volunteer Telephone Crisis Supporter

Somewhere in Australia there is a new call to Lifeline every minute. Lifeline volunteers answer more than 900,000 calls a year.



Apply now to Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland
sydney@wesleymission.org.au
(02) 8922 9097

lifelinesydney.org

Mid North Coast of NSW sees increased support at critical time

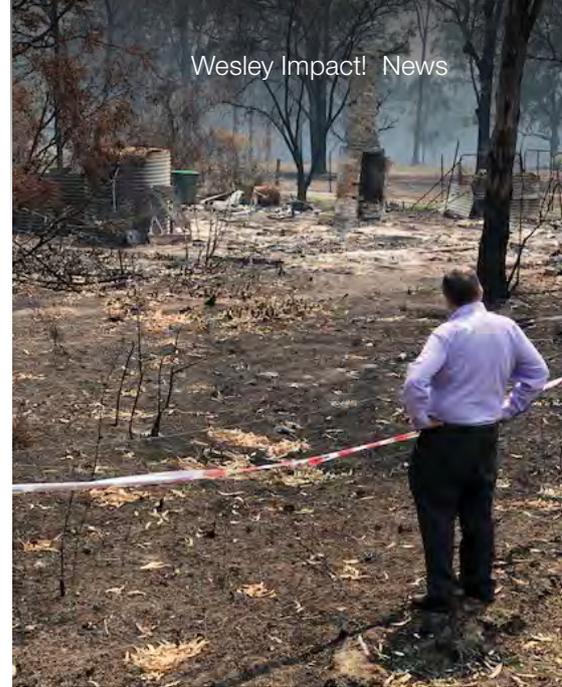
In March 2019 the Rev Keith Garner opened Wesley Mission's first community hub in Taree, signifying a revitalised work in both Word and deed in the region. Building relationships and partnerships to support the expansion of this work has been a key focus in the last 12 months.

"Some people have asked me why we chose Taree to launch this new initiative. We have a strong rationale for this decision, for many reasons. Taree, like many once significant towns in our state is being asked to respond to increasing social disadvantage. The effect of drought, unemployment, drugs and poor mental health are all exacerbated by limited access to services. Wesley Mission wants to be part of strengthening this region and to bring increased opportunities to communities outside metro areas," said Mr Garner.

Then just eight months later, in early November 2019, out of control bushfires moved through large areas of the Mid North Coast, killing four people and destroying hundreds of homes. Many people in the region were evacuated and have suffered greatly.

"One of the greatest privileges in ministry is to visit with people in the midst of suffering. As soon as it was possible I wanted to travel to be with our friends in Taree again. As we approached Taree, for about 20 kilometres, all we could see were charred trees and road signs that had melted in the heat. One can only begin to imagine what the experience was like for the courageous firefighters and members of emergency services. We are so grateful for their bravery," said Mr Garner.

There were two aspects to the visit, to bring hampers, vouchers, toys and



tools donated by the broader Wesley Mission family and to continue to build relationships and offer support to local people and with the Uniting Church in the area.

"Wesley Mission is not a fair-weather friend; our call is to 'do all the good we can'. Our commitment to the Mid North Coast continues to grow. And I want to pay tribute to those who have given of themselves in sacrificial service at this particularly challenging time," said Mr Garner. ■

Wesley Mission celebrates five years in Coffs Harbour

It's been five years since Wesley Mission first opened its doors in Coffs Harbour. And what a journey it's been.

Starting with youth accommodation services, across five years Wesley Mission has expanded in Coffs Harbour to offer Wesley ParentsNext, a program which supports parents with employment goals, and foster care services through Wesley Dalmar.

A local to the area, Wesley Youth Accommodation Program Manager, Meena has played an important role in Wesley Mission's growth in Coffs Harbour and the Mid North Coast region.

"Coffs Harbour is seen as a big hub for community services, so it makes sense that we have a bigger office



and bigger presence here," said Meena. "I just love seeing the blue doves popping up. I just feel proud when I see it."

Based out of Coffs Harbour, Meena's youth accommodation work expands to Bellingen and Nambucca Valley. Being a local has provided Meena opportunities to build trust within these communities.

In August 2018 Wesley Mission expanded in the Mid North Coast region by bringing together key community services under one roof in Bowraville: Wesley Youth Accommodation and Wesley ParentsNext.

"Youth homelessness was really high up there and we really needed an office in Bowraville to show the community that we are here to stay," explained Meena.

By joining services together, we can support all the needs of people who walk through our doors.

"In regional areas, services are minimal, and we don't have many resources here, so it makes sense to work together," said Meena. ■



Easter 2020

signals of hope

“Our public events may not be going ahead in their usual format, but the message of hope we receive at Easter is needed now more than ever.”

Rev Keith V Garner AM

Watch the Easter Sunday broadcast

6am Easter Sunday on Channel 9, listen to Hope 103.2 or view the livestream on Wesley Mission’s Facebook page and at wesleymission.org.au

Connect with Wesley Mission in new ways this Easter
wesleymission.org.au/easter