

wesley

Winter 2018

impact

The
Bondi Prodigal
called to **God's table**

Finding a home

**It's a matter
of Fayeith**

Tackling homelessness

**Australian sports
stars unite**

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“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

Mark 12:28



Hello

Our firm belief at Wesley Mission that ‘every life matters’ has its footing in the modest but powerful idea that we are all invited to sit at God’s table.

It comes from the conviction that God’s love extends to all, especially those in most need.

Jesus told the Parable of the Great Banquet, “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:13–14).

In our work at Wesley Mission we often find that the people who respond most readily to the invitation are those who have suffered much in their lives. Many are broken in both mind and spirit and the offer of God’s love in Word and deed meets the deepest of needs and longings.

In this edition of *Wesley Impact!* you will read about several people who have responded to our offer of unconditional support and care and whose lives have been transformed as a result.

David Ututaonga was homeless and living rough next to a city beach when he was invited to move to **Wesley Mission’s Edward Eagar Lodge**. The self-described Bondi Prodigal had no work or stable place to live. His downward spiral began when he became indebted to others and the industry he worked in shunned him for younger employees. Trusting others had also become problematic.

Brought up as a Christian, he wandered far from his faith but during his time in the spiritual wilderness, he realised he was not alone and was drawn back to the promises he had embraced as a child and young person.

A confirmation of God’s constant love came when two of Wesley Mission’s outreach workers extended a hand of friendship and hope. These days he is preparing for independent living at one of Wesley Mission’s Community Housing centres and sharing his love of God in worship and with others.

Fayeith is a young woman from Taree on the NSW North Coast. She had experienced enormous instability in her life and at age 16 was sleeping in a women’s refuge. She was far from her family and friends. Wesley Mission extended an invitation to join **Wesley Youth Accommodation Transitional Housing** program.

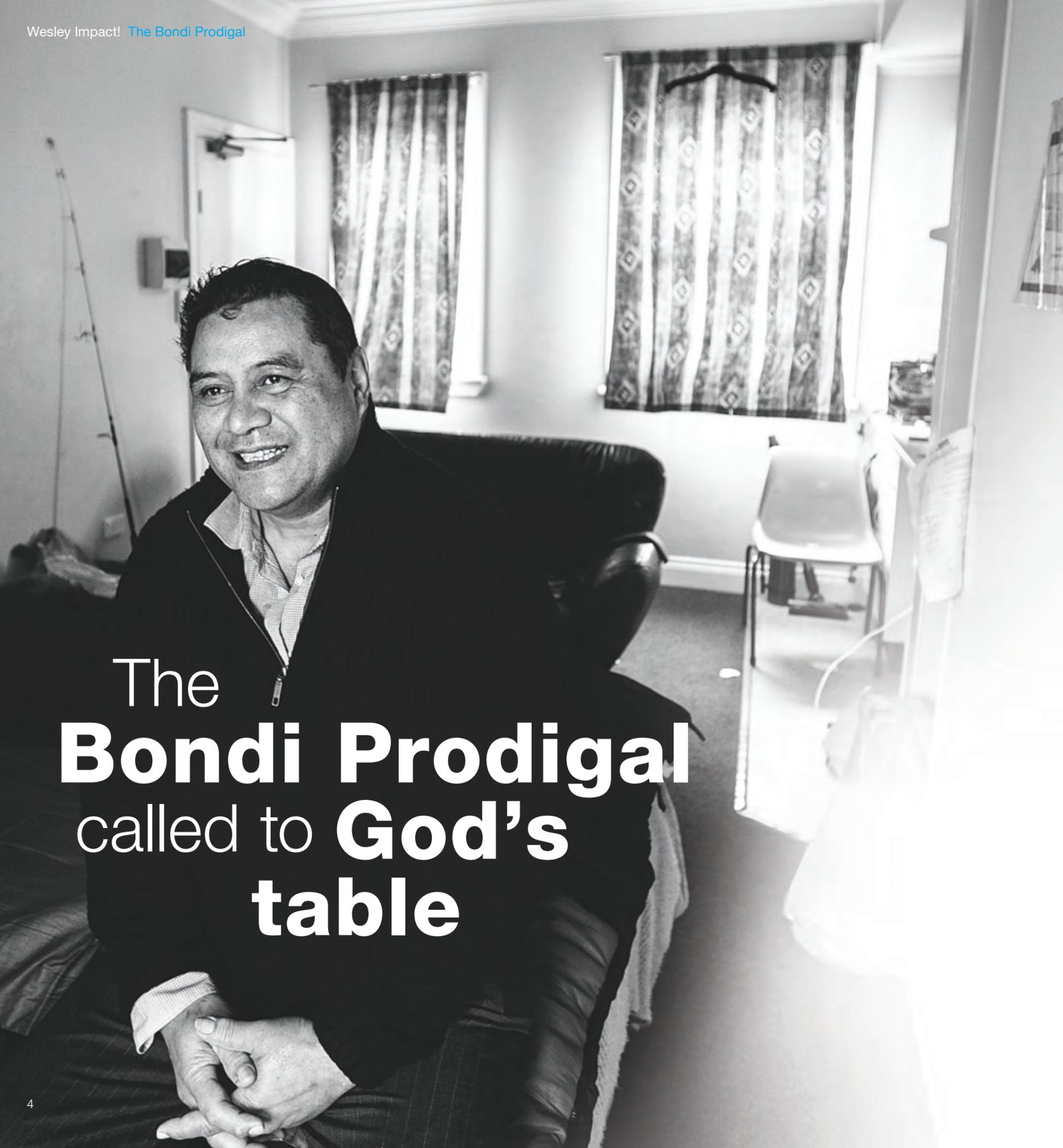
Like David she prepared for independence, learnt budgeting and living skills, and revisited her cultural heritage in so many significant and creative ways. Today her life is flourishing having secured a two bedroom apartment through the Housing New South Wales and undertaking a transition to work program.

No matter what our journey in life might be, God’s love in Jesus Christ remains constant and is ever present. His invitation to share in that love extends to those who we care for and to those people who support this vital Word and deed ministry each day. I am delighted that you can share in such a mission.

Rev Keith V Garner AM
Superintendent/CEO
Wesley Mission

“A confirmation of God’s constant love came when two of Wesley Mission’s outreach workers extended a hand of friendship and hope.”





The Bondi Prodigal called to God's table

A ray of sunlight punctuates a cold, grey winter's day in Sydney's inner-west washing its warmth over a pair of hands resting on a windowsill. The hands are large but placid and constantly clasped in a form of inherent thankfulness.

David Ututaonga looks heavenward. The back street below the Wesley Community Housing block is awash from the last downpour. He remembers the cold nights at the Bondi Pavilion and the small community of rough sleepers huddled around an open fire. He was the resident cook and protector of the most vulnerable of the icon's congregants.

In his early fifties, David thought his life was over, in debt to the wrong crowd and dabbling in desires that belied his Christian upbringing, he found himself homeless and adrift. He was once a bouncer at some of Sydney's more flamboyant nightspots but now he was dispensed and no longer wanted by an industry more impressed by flashy modernity than maturity.

It had been a long road since arriving in Sydney from New Zealand in 1981.

Back in the 1980s, David and his peers ruled the nightspots. His security was

strong but fair. He gained many friends, some who later took advantage of this gentle man.

"My main reason for being homeless was debt," David said. "I had a \$5,000 loan I couldn't repay. I was getting less work and hours because I was an older security guard. The younger guys came into the scene and took all the work load. From there I ended up surviving with desperate people. Where does a bouncer go after all these years: up or down? I started slowly going backwards.

"I was brought up as a Christian kid. I had a security licence and I was useful to other people. That's how I survived. Some of these people had gambling and drug problems. I had neither. I just wanted enough money to stay alive, but you still got caught up in the whirlpool of rubbish.

"What kept me alive was thinking about my mother and father, my brothers and sisters who were all brought up in a Christian background.

"I never had a church at the time but I had a faith from my childhood. I am the Prodigal's Son."

David paid off his debts to people he described as "underworld

criminals”: types who used both reward and intimidation to keep him in their fold. “They housed me, they fed me and they paid me... and I paid what I owed to them,” he said.

In 2014 he left the inner-west and headed to Parramatta to link with family members who sadly shunned him, fearing that David’s recent past would catch up with him.

David returned to Bondi, one of his old haunts. He knew the area and the folk. “The people were nice and polite,” he said. “I felt safe.”

An old friend paid for his accommodation in a hotel but when that ran its six week course, he meandered down to the Bondi Pavilion with swag in hand.

“I had lived in Bondi for 10 or 12 years and the people were more friendly,” he said.

Each ocean sunrise would remind him of God’s promises and the Christian love and compassion of his mother and father, and aunt and uncle who raised him as their own when his mother developed post natal depression.

This two year Bondi sojourn taught him much about himself with the beach itself an incarnate metaphor for both his own spiritual wilderness and restoration.

“I never had a church at the time but I had a faith from my childhood. I am the Prodigal’s Son.”

“The beach has a healing thing about it,” David said. “As a Christian I had back slidden but you can’t run and can’t hide. God will never leave you or forsake you.”

In the depth of winter, God’s people came to play their part in David’s restoration.

Homeless service outreach workers visited David and his friends several times. The invitation of a warm bed, a hot shower and meal was extended twice before David accepted.

“They did explain who they were and what they were doing,” David said. “They were observing me and I was observing them. It was to do with trust. You go back to those survival things.”

On the third visit, workers from **Wesley Mission’s Edward Eagar Lodge** arrived on a bitterly cold winter’s morning.

“They offered us transitional housing,” David said. “I didn’t know what they were talking about. On the coldest day of the year, I declared I was ready.

“It was to do with trust not pride. I had been testing them to see if they were loyal in what they were doing. Claudia and Jackie were the ones who saw me. They were amazing.”

The table had been prepared and the invitation extended to Bondi’s Prodigal’s Son.

“‘This time I’m ready’, I told them,” David said. “I grabbed my sleeping bag and swag and my fishing line and rod and ended up at Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge. From there the training began... the training to do with social and with all the other people who had suffered homelessness.

“The room I had was warm... it was heaven! The caseworkers were kind. These people were helpful and I got involved with the centre’s activities.”

David received health and medical support, participated in **Pathways training** and got a part-time job. “It was my ticket out from the hole I had dug myself into,” he said.

He lived at Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge for about a year before securing a unit in the city’s inner-west with **Wesley Community Housing**. It’s here where he has been learning living and budgeting skills which are preparing him for independent living.

“I’m saving money and getting myself sorted out for the next house move. I’ve bought a vacuum cleaner and I’m feeling like Mrs Doubtfire!” he quipped.

He is also learning how to better manage his anxiety and depression

and is attending regular doctor’s appointments.

Part of his growth and support also finds purchase with his continuing relationship with Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge as he attends a Bible study run by its chaplain, Michael Tang, as well as the centre’s worship service. David takes his friends from the Wesley Community Housing property along to both weekly events.

“I’m saving money and getting myself sorted out for the next house move. I’ve bought a vacuum cleaner and I’m feeling like Mrs Doubtfire!”

“He’s a teacher of the Word... you’ve never met such a cool man,” David says of Michael. “He will meet you one on one and talk to you straight. He never judges. He keeps you grounded in God’s Word. He thrives when he sees us growing.”

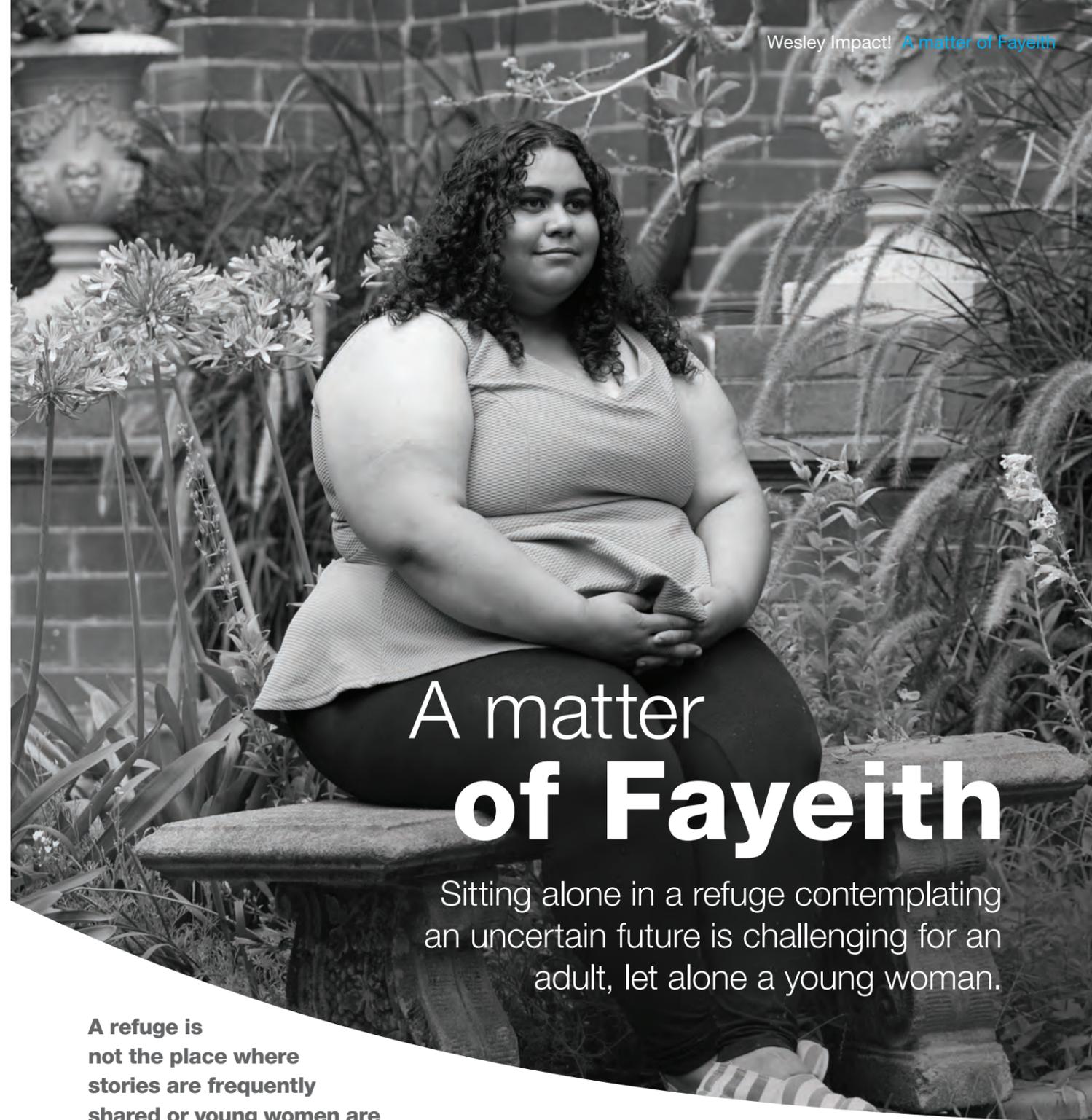
David is looking forward to becoming a community worker or nurse and maybe even a husband and dad.

“He’s a lovely, caring guy who cares a lot about the other people who live at the property,” said Liesa Davis, Tenancy and Community Worker with Wesley Community Housing.

“He’s really chatty and helps. He asks lots of questions and is a helpful guy for the other tenants.”

David insists that he wants to “keep moving”.

“It’s up to me to encourage those who help you,” David said. “We all want to be loved and wanted... just like God who says he will never leave or forsake you.” ■



A matter of Fayeith

Sitting alone in a refuge contemplating an uncertain future is challenging for an adult, let alone a young woman.

A refuge is not the place where stories are frequently shared or young women are mentored by their elders. Amid preoccupations with security there is little inclination for conversation.

The walls of a shelter can harbour both pain and hope. It is a place where silence is a circuit breaker and a secure deadlock a panacea for peace.

For a shy, young Indigenous woman who has known instability, a refuge can be both a blessing and a challenge. A few minutes of distant sobbing from down the hall can fill an entire night with unwanted emotion.

For most of her childhood, Fayeith moved between foster care and a matrix of family members. At just 16 years of age and far from her mob at Taree on the NSW North Coast,

Fayeith was once again in uncharted waters. Life in a refuge was another experience foisted upon her far too early.

However, Fayeith was always hopeful. She knew deep down that stable accommodation would be part of her ongoing answer. There were other pieces to the puzzle as well—education, employment and skills.



Wesley Mission caseworker Jenny co-ordinated and supported Fayeith during the transition.

While living in the refuge Fayeith applied for government housing but long waiting lists and other complex challenges left her at risk of homelessness.

“When I first moved in I was finding it hard to manage money, to know what to buy and what not to buy. Now I’ve learned how to budget and I can do my shopping and pay the bills.”

That is when Wesley Mission stepped in, offering Fayeith a place in its transitional homeless youth program, which provides secure accommodation and support to young people waiting for permanent housing.

Initially too shy to leave her bedroom, Fayeith began engaging with

community activities. A proud Indigenous woman from the Birpai tribe, she had been denied the chance to learn about her heritage as a child, but as her confidence grew she began to explore her love of art and colour by taking Aboriginal art classes.

Music was another creative outlet that engaged her soul and quieted her mind: an additional opportunity to gather herself and deal with the little things in life like organisation, remembering appointments and being on time.

These are the kinds of skills that are vital when navigating a complex and sometimes overwhelming social services system.

“My place was tiny but it was comfy,” Fayeith said. “I felt so shy and nervous at the start. But as the months went by I started to feel like myself again. I could do anything I wanted—play music, draw, colour in—everything that is important to me.

“When I first moved in I was finding it hard to manage money, to know what to buy and what not to buy. Now I’ve learned how to budget and I can do my shopping and pay the bills.”

As well as a safe place to live, **Wesley Youth Accommodation** helps young people access the support services and resources they need to move to independent living. Wesley Mission caseworker Jenny co-ordinated and supported Fayeith during the transition.

As a young woman barely out of childhood, Fayeith needed close supervision and daily assistance.

“It can be scary coming into a new program as there are so many unknowns,” Jenny said. “We understand that fear so we try to reassure every client that they are in a safe and supportive environment where they will be able to flourish.”

For Fayeith, this extra support became even more vital after an

accident left her injured and needing surgery. Confined to her apartment and unable to walk for several weeks, Fayeith was anxious and depressed. Jenny ensured she received emotional support and counselling by connecting her with a local mental health team.

Fayeith learned strategies for managing her depression and anxiety. Listening to music or colouring in are simple activities that have made a big difference to her coping abilities.

As Fayeith’s mental health stabilised and her injuries healed, Jenny was able to connect Fayeith with services that would ultimately help her live independently. A living skills program taught her household management, nutrition, budgeting and meal preparation.

Juggling multiple appointments was also a challenge: missing mental health appointments and vital

Centrelink meetings would jeopardise Fayeith’s income and stability, so Jenny worked with her to set up a system that would help her stay organised and on track.

“I always have my phone with me to listen to my music so Jenny showed me how to use the calendar,” Fayeith said. “Now I put the start and end time in for each appointment. It’s working much better for me!”

Jenny believes these personalised services are what distinguish Wesley Mission as it provides for those most in need.

“I guess that’s the biggest thing about our program; it is client-centred,” Jenny said. “Everyone comes with such different backgrounds, such different stories, behaviours, needs and wants. And it is up to us to work out the best support system to help our clients achieve what they want for their future. It’s about their goals, not ours.

“I guess that’s the biggest thing about our program; it is client-centred.”

“Fayeith was with us for about eight months and in that time our focus was getting her to a place where she was able to be independent. We had to really prepare her for living on her own and being organised. There’s a lot of layers to Fayeith’s story, and many services are involved. So she really needed to be able to manage her time and make sure she went to every appointment.”

All of the preparation and hard work came to fruition in late 2017, when Fayeith received a permanent placement with New South Wales Housing and moved into a two bedroom apartment.

Her life is more stable, she feels confident and is taking care of herself.

Fayeith is once again enjoying the company of her family. She shares her apartment with her younger brother and enjoys spending time with her other siblings and being Aunty to their children.

Jenny sees a bright future ahead for Fayeith.

“She has come so far since I met her 11 months ago,” Jenny said. “She’s grown from a quiet, shy person who didn’t like to talk much at all, to a confident young lady who agreed to being interviewed today without any hesitation.

“There is no cookie cutter approach to what we do here at Wesley Mission. Our responsibility as case workers is to get to know every client as well as we can, so we can work out the best way to help them.”

Fayeith is attending a transition to work program and hopes to work in retail. She has learned to take pleasure from the simple things in life—music, art, cooking her favourite meal of sausages and mashed potatoes, and spending time with her loved ones.

“It has been an honour to help Fayeith grow into the person she was always meant to be,” Jenny said. “I’ve encouraged her to step outside her comfort zone and try activities she wouldn’t normally have done, but she’s done the same for me—mostly with music! I think she has a lot to share.”

Fayeith has her own words of wisdom shaped by her recent past: “Don’t stress too much. Take it day by day. Be yourself. And if you need help, speak up. Don’t bottle it up.” ■

The open invitation: guess who's coming to dinner?

Who are you prepared to sit down to dinner with? Many of us share meals with family, friends and colleagues but how many of us offer the less fortunate a seat at our table?

The Bible teaches that Christians are to be radically different from the world in how we view and treat our neighbours. In fact, we should go out of our way to provide for people experiencing homelessness and others in need or poverty.

In Luke 14:13-14, Jesus Christ said: "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Wesley Mission works with those who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness with the aim of them securing a permanent home with a supporting community.

Every day, three Wesley Mission staff members, Rob Seaton, Vanessa Daniels and Jade Moloney assist those who are disadvantaged. They are part of a bigger team which last year provided support to almost 4,000 people experiencing or were at risk of homelessness.

They each believe they are called by God to reach out to those who are less fortunate and mirror Jesus' example of inviting all people,

from all walks of life, to sit at his banquet table.

"Those experiencing homelessness are often without access to basic human rights and in this [Bible] passage, Jesus affirms that this is not OK and that it is the responsibility of all those who have plenty to not keep individual riches to oneself, but rather be part of a community that values all people equally and that share resources, time and relationship generously," said Jade, Wesley Youth Accommodation Team Leader, Community Engagement Team.

So, how does this happen? It begins with an open invitation.

"Wesley Mission invites people to the table in a way that responds to the immediate needs of disadvantaged people in our community. The 'invitation' is a non-discriminatory open door that doesn't turn anyone away," she said.

Wesley Homeless Services Senior Program and Practice Manager, Vanessa, said it was important to engage people in need within a local community, letting them know that they are welcome and can get vital support.

"The invitation can be as simple as a genuine smile, or a welcoming face that greets you at the door, a kind voice on the other end of the phone. It's listening to someone or taking time

out of your day to find out how theirs is going," Vanessa said.

Wesley Specialist Homelessness Services Operations Manager, Rob, believes: "We need to go out of our way to look for those who need assistance."

The invitation is more than a welcome according to Rob. It should offer warmth, worth and a sense of belonging. As Jesus invites all people, from all walks of life, to sit with him at his banquet table, Wesley Mission offers people a place of comfort, while finding them a secure and stable home for the long-term.

So, what does this experience look like in 2018?

While it might begin with a short-term stay in a crisis support centre, Wesley Mission's goal is to support the whole person and assist in meeting their needs. As well as finding long-term accommodation, it offers mental health support, financial counselling, education and training and disability support.

"We want people to come as they are—it makes no difference how you arrive—clean-shaven, well-dressed or in last week's sweats. You're not treated differently. If you are in need, come, our door is open," Vanessa said.

"It's about offering dignity, while

opening our doors and being available for those most in need—no matter what the circumstances—if you need support come and see us.

"It's inviting a connection that goes beyond the common practice surface level, which not only creates an ease for people to approach the table but allows people to feel safe and secure throughout their experience with us."

An open invitation also goes beyond the community services support provided by Wesley Mission. People experiencing homelessness can feel marginalised, alone and vulnerable.

Wesley Mission seeks to create awareness about the stigmas of homelessness and spread a message that encourages Australians to reach out to those most in need—no matter their circumstances.

"It's about being a voice and raising awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness, de-stigmatising the experience and increasing our consciousness and understanding around the day-to-day experiences people face," says Vanessa.

Jesus' example of an open invitation continues to drive Vanessa, Rob and Jade in their roles at Wesley Mission.

"Our motivation to help our neighbour shouldn't come from our own desires to feel good but from what Christ did for us through the cross," Vanessa said.

"I believe God has shared with me his love for the lost and the broken-hearted, as well as his desire to see each person healed and loved in the way that he intended. He is my source for strength, compassion,

wisdom, hope, love and as such keeps me sustained to complete the work that he has called me to do."

Jade views it as her responsibility as a Christian to help those who are disadvantaged.

"God takes notice of the way in which we care for those who are disadvantaged or experiencing homelessness because it is a direct reflection of our heart and where we are placing our treasure. When we are reluctant to extend an 'invitation' to those around us, our heart has forgotten the fundamental truth that through no merit of our own, we have received an undeserved invitation to sit at God's banquet. When this is truly realised, how can we then not extend the invitation to others?" Jade said.

There are multiple passages in the Bible that address the Christian responsibility to

help those who are disadvantaged, many of which provide an inherent motivation that is carried in his calling.

"It's hard to overlook words like, 'Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. And whatever you didn't do... (Matthew 25). It's also hard to overlook how closely Jesus identifies with people who are homeless."

Visit wesleymission.org.au/get-involved to discover ways to follow in Jesus' footsteps and support those most in need. ■

Wesley Mission's Rob Seaton... "come as you are."

Generosity:

a principle in mission alongside those in need

with the **Rev Keith V Garner AM**



Mark 12:38-44

There are very many aspects of our work at Wesley Mission which are closely related to the word and thought of Generosity.

Obviously, we think of generosity in the context of the ability of people to give and, in doing so, to change the lives and opportunities of those who have little.

This is what is in my mind whenever I invite people to support our work and I am continually amazed at the wonderful expressions of generosity.

However, this is not the only kind of generosity and I hope you will journey with me as I explore what this might mean in the wider context of our attitude towards others, our willingness

to reach out and offer hope to people who feel bereft of opportunity and at times lack the desire to reach beyond their own sphere of life.

“But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling the disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all

gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” (12:42-44)

I find myself attracted to this story, but especially as we read it in Mark where it is set in the greater context of the question asked by a sympathetic scribe, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” (v.29). It is only Mark that records the favourable response of Jesus in declaring that he was “not far from the kingdom of God.” (v.34)

We often identify this familiar incident in the gospel as ‘The Widow’s Offering’. It is introduced by Mark with words that reveal his apparent critique of some of the religious leaders of the day. He pointed to their over-concern about how they dressed, their desire to be treated with respect and their expectation to be given the most important seats in the house.

There are many definitions of generosity and it is similar to other rich words such as liberality, magnanimity, open-handedness and many others. By the way Jesus uses the example of a poor widow, we are reminded that generosity is not based on a person’s economic status, but flows from the passion of a person’s life.

Generosity begins in humility

Jesus celebrated the generosity of the widow, for her sacrifice though small was complete. One modern writer has contended, “At the core of the generous person’s heart is the penchant for Christ’s love—the desire to receive it and to give it to everyone along the way who is in need.”¹

Jesus knew the difference between giving as a performance for others to observe and giving out of a generous heart. The difference between the widow’s attitude and that of others was plain to see.

When we think about humility, we refer back to God whose love has been poured out to us in creation, in providing

for our various needs and his many gifts offered to us throughout life. Grace is closely identified with generosity. God’s nature is gracious, so his generosity is simply a part of who he is. Therefore, what he asks from us is always in response to what he has done for us. “We love God because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

One of the most helpful books on the Gospel of Mark that I have read in recent years is entitled ‘Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter’ written by C Clifton Black. He drew the conclusion that “no gospel probes more relentlessly than Mark the implications of proclaiming Christ crucified.”²

The humility of this woman is a lesson for us all. Many people might have been tempted to counsel her to hold onto the few coins she possessed with the practical concern that one day she may need them! However, the humility that she displays is the dominant feature of her life.

Generosity grows out of love

Real generosity always grows out of love. Here at Wesley Mission we are continually strengthened by people who give not because they have to, or because they have been told to, but because of their love of God. I see generosity not only in terms of what people give, but also in their attitude towards others who are easily ignored or dismissed in our selfish society.

This account is in stark contrast to the hypocrisy of religious leaders and doubly emphasises the point when it is a disenfranchised woman who demonstrates real generosity. The issue about justice is powerfully made by one commentator: “Set against the touching picture of worship is the widow’s prospects for the future. Her outlook is bleak. The most distressing aspect of her plight is the thought that the wheels of justice were set in motion against her, for if the keepers of the law devoured widows’ houses, then the poor were trapped in poverty.”³

Generosity is the mark of gratitude

Generosity is a response to the love of God and is poured out towards others. I have made the point on numerous occasions, when talking about giving, that there are three ways in which we can give. There is “grudge giving”, “duty giving” or “thanksgiving”. It is only the last that will change this world. Such giving is best understood in a loving relationship with God.

One of the features of much fundraising, and at times even some people’s support of the church, is that we invite people to give from the left-overs of their lives. This has one great and fundamental flaw—when we appeal for generosity in this way, our left-overs will always be small because, in selfish minds, generosity can never exceed needs. Put another way, generosity is in direct conflict with self-preservation.

Returning to the matter of context, “The placement of this story here may be to contrast the greed of the teachers of the law with the liberality of the widow.”⁴

The person who is rich in this world, when all is said and done, is not the person who has much, but the person who gives much. My Formation in Ministry training took place in the city of Bristol in the West Country of England. It was here that a remarkable Christian, George Müller, set up homes for children in need at a time when they were often ignored if they were left without family. He was a man of enormous faith and I conclude these thoughts on generosity, which underpin our mission alongside people in need, with some of his words, “God judges what we give by what we keep”.

Rev Keith V Garner AM

1. MacDonald, Gordon, *Secrets of the Generous Life*, Tynedale Publishers, p.161.
2. Black, C Clifton, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*, Fortress Press, p.234.
3. Kernaghan, Ronald J, *Mark*, IVP, p.245.
4. Wessel, Walter V, *Mark: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Regency Reference Library, p.740.

■

From bombs to a Sydney barista: when coffee gives you a real taste of life



The Suncorp Community Café is a training ground for people like Syrian refugee Shaha Terzain.

A Sydney café is generating more than just a caffeine buzz, with a new initiative creating education and career pathways one coffee at a time.

Launched in partnership between Suncorp, Wesley Mission and the Darcy Street Project, the Suncorp Community Café is a training ground for people who have encountered barriers to education or employment.

Over three months, students complete formal training in hospitality and work experience, as well as access to financial literacy workshops which will make an invaluable difference to their confidence and financial wellbeing.

One recipient of the training is Shaha Terzain who remembers his family's escape from the bombed and besieged Syrian city of Aleppo. The 21 year-old refugee talks of a place where "guns were

everywhere" Forced into the Syrian army, Shaha, fled with his parents and brother to Lebanon where they have lived for the past three years.

He now resides with his family in western Sydney and is grateful for the opportunity to learn skills at the Suncorp Community Café and through training provided by **Wesley Vocational Institute (WVI)**.

Apart from the 'hands on' training, Shaha is one of eight students undertaking a Certificate II in Hospitality course. The WVI course will eventually see 32 disadvantaged people engaged in the program. He said he was looking forward to the prospects provided to him.

"I am looking for a career here in Australia, not a hand out," Shaha said. "I want to work. I love to be able to provide a service to people."

Wesley Mission CEO the Rev Keith Garner AM said that each year a number of Australians from diverse backgrounds struggled to access the know-how they need to secure employment.

"To meet this challenge the Suncorp Community Café is providing much-needed resources, support and experience so they can confidently pursue further education or entry to the workforce," Mr Garner said.

The Café is located in the Suncorp Discovery Store on Pitt Street Mall, which Darcy Street Project Founder, John Cafferatta said would offer students invaluable workplace experience.

"We have been running similar initiatives for a few years and it's amazing to see the transformation of a person's self-worth from the time they start to when they graduate—they leave confident, independent and feeling positive about their future—they also get to serve around 1,000 coffees," Mr Cafferatta said.

Suncorp Executive Manager Corporate Responsibility, Sara Parrott, said the Café is a great example of what can be achieved when businesses and community organisations work together. ■

Wesley Mission delivering award winning financial literacy program to women of Norfolk Island

Wesley Mission is delivering an award winning free financial literacy program to women on Norfolk Island.

The *In Charge of My Money* program is educating up to 60 women on basic money management, as well as training and a mentoring program for women and girls.

It will help Norfolk Island women develop their budgeting skills, learn strategies to avoid debt, and become financially independent. The training will give women the confidence to make informed and effective money management decisions.

The program will also make a positive and lasting difference to children, families and the broader community, as participants share their skills and knowledge.

"Financial literacy is a key factor in creating financial and personal well-being," said Wesley Mission CEO, the Rev Keith Garner. "Sound knowledge is important to making good financial decisions, building resilience in individuals and social capacity within communities. Wesley Mission is delighted that we can provide such a pivotal program."

Women's Advocacy Group Norfolk Island (WAGNI) convenor, Eve Semple, said the grant will empower Norfolk Island women and youth, and give them choice.

"Increasing the financial literacy of Norfolk Island's women and young people aged 14 to 17 is critical in increasing their ability to make good financial decisions. It will empower them through the rest of their lives, including importantly, their retirement," Ms Semple said.

"Knowing how to manage things such as budgets, investments, loans and superannuation accounts is critical to our quality of life whether we are just about to embark on our careers or have had many already."

The Commonwealth Government is providing \$15,000 to WAGNI for the *In Charge of My Money* program,

which will be delivered on Norfolk Island by Wesley Mission Sydney.

The program began in 2011 as an extension of **Wesley Mission's financial counselling** program and in 2013 won a *MoneySmart Award*. The award was part of the *MoneySmart* initiative of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC).

The program has been delivered to more than 4,000 Australians and received a glowing report following evaluation by the Department of Psychology at Macquarie University and the School of Economics, Finance and Marketing at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. ■



Lynne Flynn presenting *In Charge Of My Money* program on Norfolk Island.

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Australian sports stars unite



Taryn Woods, Joany Badenhorst, Rev Keith Garner and Toyota's Darren Ryan.

Australia's leading sports stars have come together to tackle the nation's growing homelessness crisis by helping to raise a record \$160,000 for Wesley Mission services.

Wesley Mission's Sports United event attracted more than 220 people, including current and past sporting heroes and identities who shared their stories and support for the cause of ending homelessness.

The number of people experiencing homelessness has increased from 104,000 to 116,000 in just five years: a fact that resonated with those attending the Sports United fundraising luncheon.

Former Australian Wallaby Tim Gavin told the crowd that homelessness was a growing problem that must be addressed.

"A lot of people find themselves homeless through no fault of their own and we should support them if possible," Tim Gavin said.

Joany Badenhorst, the co-captain of Australia's Paralympic Team said homelessness was an issue close to the heart of most Australians.

"I'm lucky where I'm in a position where I have this platform as an athlete and it's a privilege to help share the work of Wesley Mission," Joany said.

Australian Olympic water polo gold medallist Taryn Woods said she found it frightening that 18 per cent of all people experiencing homelessness in NSW were children. "It really gives you an idea of the people affected," Taryn said.

The event was hosted by former World Cup winning Wallaby Rugby Union Captain Nick Farr-Jones who interviewed some of the sporting identities.

Up for auction were a range of outstanding events and hospitality.

Other sports stars lending their support were former NSW and Australian cricketer Greg Matthews, former Bulldogs, NSW captain and Australian rugby league half back Steve Mortimer, and Australian Gold Medal Olympic Diver, Matthew Mitcham.

Wesley Mission CEO the Rev Keith Garner said he was delighted at the level of corporate, business and sporting support for the event which is now in its ninth year. He also thanked Nick Farr-Jones and Philip Hartog for their work in organising the event.

"The event is growing year by year but so is the demand for our services," Mr Garner said. "Preventing homelessness and caring for those already trapped in its grip is becoming more complex and challenging.

"As demand for our homeless services grow, Wesley Mission is relying more than ever on the generous donations received from our supporters so that we can continue this vital work."

Gold sponsor for the event Toyota was delighted to support the Wesley Mission Sports United Annual Lunch claiming it to be "an outstanding day and a most worthy cause."

"Of course the primary driver is that our contribution and support will assist in helping those fellow citizens who find themselves homeless," said Ian Mayer, Managing Director of Chatswood Toyota.

"Our company believes if you are in a position to help then you should do so... hence why we have a selection of organisations which we support on an ongoing basis." ■

Wesley Mission's Lifeline Sydney centre stages PM's \$34 million funding announcement

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced \$34 million in extra funding for Lifeline Australia at the centre where the telephone crisis service began 55 years ago - Wesley Mission.

Mr Turnbull visited the Sydney call centre to make the announcement and met with Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland volunteers who answer almost 40,000 calls each year. He also stopped to look at the telephone that took the first call in 1963.

"Practical love saves lives every day," Mr Turnbull said. "Thousands of volunteers taking calls from people who are lonely, are in crisis, who are thinking of taking their own lives. Their love changes and saves lives.

"But they need more support. They need better computers, better systems and so we're providing \$34 million in additional funding to support Lifeline. It's going to be matched with the love of the volunteers, the practical love that is saving lives."

The \$34 million allocated for the next four years will address an increase in volunteers and supervisors who take around one million calls nationally.

Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland volunteers told the Prime Minister that the complexity and diversity of calls were increasing. Volunteer Libby Collins said there was an increasing number of younger callers who she described as intense.

"Even though we have Kids Helpline we are getting younger callers and an increasing volume of teenagers calling, but the age range is huge," she said. "We've had a 10 year-old calling distressed up to elderly people in nursing homes."

Lifeline Australia has called the funding a "game changer".

Mr Turnbull described suicide as self-destructive but "something which hurts everyone else: friends, family... it's a waste of a life".

"Mental health and mental illness has become a very frontline issue," he said.

The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to call upon people to consider becoming a Lifeline volunteer.

"Many of them have been motivated by personal experience—a family member or a friend—and they've thought to themselves, 'I can really make a difference,'" Mr Turnbull said. "So if you feel you can make a difference, if you can share your love and provide the encouragement and support to people who are really desperate and lonely... then contact Lifeline to be a volunteer."

The CEO of Wesley Mission the Rev Keith Garner AM said he was delighted that the Australian Government had found the extra funding and backed the Prime Minister's call for more volunteers.

He said Lifeline was reliant on members of the community stepping forward with their time and skills.

"There is no doubt that this service saves lives," Dr Garner said. "We would ask people to consider the real difference that may make in the lives of people in crises." ■



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visited the Sydney Lifeline call centre and met with its volunteers.

Wesley Report: Australians perceptions of homelessness don't reflect reality

Australians believe that homelessness exists only on the streets and that the major causes are alcohol, drugs and mental illness.

They were two of the telling results of a national survey of more than 1,000 people conducted by McCrindle Research for Wesley Mission.

The survey and report reveal that the vast majority of Australians believe that people experiencing homelessness sleep rough.

However the recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011-16) figures show that only six per cent of the total homeless populations are rough sleepers. The overwhelming majority is living in over-crowded dwellings, couch surfing or dossing down with family members or friends in a garage or caravan.

Nine out of ten (92 per cent) of those surveyed believe a person experiencing homelessness was someone living on the streets or someone living in a car (76 per cent).

Only 20 per cent believed that sleeping on the floor at friend's home was a form of homelessness, families living in a shed or garage (15 per cent), or people staying in a caravan or tent medium to long term (nine per cent), staying in hotels medium to long term (three per cent) or a boarding house (three per cent).

"The survey indicates that there are some pervasive misconceptions about homelessness in NSW," the *Wesley Report* states.

"The 2016 Census data reveals that homelessness is more prevalent with more than 116,000 people now homeless in Australia, but there is clearly a lack of public awareness as to what homelessness really looks like and that of the hidden homeless."

Overwhelmingly people believe that the major causes of homelessness are drug and alcohol addiction (59 per cent), unemployment (44 per cent) and mental health issues (43 per cent).

However housing and rental affordability (29 per cent) and household debt (16 per cent), rank lower.

"The Wesley Report indicates that there's a well-entrenched stereotype which perpetuates the idea that the only people truly experiencing homelessness are those who are living on the streets," said Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Keith Garner.

"Stereotypes can define and calibrate how we respond as a community rather than address the underlying long-term causes of homelessness."

The Wesley Report calls for improved media reporting of people experiencing homelessness: too often newsrooms use video footage or photographic images of people sleeping rough to depict homelessness which can influence heartfelt public responses to the issue that subsequently define what it is and what is worthy of public support. ■

New light thrown on Jesus' ministry in The Man of Galilee series

A new six-part documentary series focusing on the ministry of Jesus in Galilee has been launched in Sydney and screened on the Nine Network across Australia.

The Man of Galilee series takes a first-hand look at the locations that Jesus Christ called home, and explores how his teachings remain relevant today.

The host of this powerful documentary and Superintendent of Wesley Mission, the Rev Keith Garner, explores the ministry of Jesus in the context of first century life, and visits the towns and cities that Jesus called his home. Jesus questioned much of first century life and called followers then as he does now. His teachings remain meaningful today.

The documentary explores the ministry of Jesus in the context of first century life by visiting historic locations including The Sea of Galilee and Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Tiberias, Tabgha, Magdala, at the Mount of Beatitudes and along the Jordan River. He also invites viewers to ask their own questions about the impact of Jesus' life and ministry of earth.



The Rev Keith Garner, Superintendent of Wesley Mission at Mt Arbel in Galilee.

"Throughout my ministry, I've been very conscious of the importance of the Galilee in Jesus' ministry," Mr Garner said. "Galilee was the predominate part of Jesus' ministry. It is in this context that he told his stories. It's at Galilee where he reveals himself as the risen Lord.

"It was where he lived, taught and brought about remarkable change in people's lives. Two thousand years later, it is possible to imagine, and even enter into God's calling in the person of Jesus Christ, through conversation with others as you visit this beautiful area.

"We are invited to consider afresh not only what his calling meant for the first disciples, but also what it can mean for those of us who have to live out our faith in the cities, towns and villages of the 21st century.

"My real hope is that this Man of Galilee will become Lord and Saviour to those who watch it and that they can put their trust in this man who has changed this world, and can change their lives."

In the first century, there were over 200 towns and villages around the Sea of Galilee, and more than 250 boats fished its waters. The Galilee was a great agricultural area and was the setting for much of the mission of Jesus Christ. It has much to say to us today.

Each of the six videos has a study guide and questions. Watch the trailer or order the series for your church or study group at www.wesleymission.org.au/the-man-of-galilee. ■

The Man of Galilee

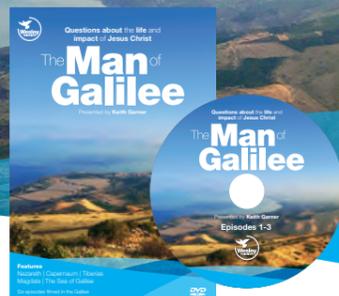
Presented by Keith Garner

Experience the Sea of Galilee with a first-hand look at the locations that Jesus Christ called home, and explore how his teachings remain relevant today.

"I have immense regard for the work of the Rev Keith Garner and Wesley Mission. In this video Keith explores the Christian faith which is the basis for so much of the community and welfare work conducted by the Mission."

Hon John Howard OM AC Prime Minister of Australia (1996 – 2007)

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