

# wesley impact!

Christmas 2013

## God's plans or yours this Christmas?

**The faithful daughter**  
Visda's story

**A mind-altering God**  
One man's journey out of the drug trade

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Where stated, names and some details have been changed and/or models have been used in the photographs to protect identities and maintain confidentiality.



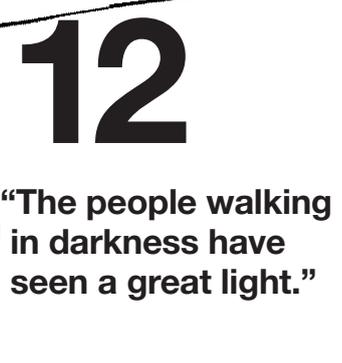
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Wesley Mission is a part of the Uniting Church in Australia.

**Wesley Impact!** is the journal of Wesley Mission, Sydney, and is a member of the Australasian Religious Press Association. Articles from the magazine may be reprinted with the permission of the editor.



**“When they saw the star they were overjoyed ...”**

Matthew 2:10



# hello.

At Christmas we are often busy preparing for holidays and the new year. We are also planning for Christmas Day festivities and the gifts we buy for family and friends. Although we make plans, we have little time to consider the greatest gift of all at Christmas—Jesus Christ. His gift to humanity is new life and fresh hope for the world.

In this edition of *Wesley Impact!* you will read about two people who have had remarkable turnarounds after encountering and trusting God. Each had plans: one for a better life in a new country; the other for a life of wealth accrued at the expense of others. When their plans went wrong they found strength and courage through the love of God and faith in Jesus.

They are just two of the thousands of people who are embraced by the Word and deed ministry of Wesley Mission. It is a ministry of caring and giving that helps people realise a new future and their potential in a shattered world; a world no different in many ways to that encountered by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem and into which our Saviour was born.

May you and those you love and know be drawn to the centrality of Christmas—Jesus Christ. If we all just stop for a moment to consider the real meaning of Christmas and reach out to help others, we will find the world a much better place in which to live.

I send you my personal and warmest greetings for a happy and holy Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith V Garner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Rev Dr Keith V Garner  
Superintendent/CEO

Wesley Mission







# The faithful daughter

**Visda Dewi's beaming smile and steady eye gives you an indication of her innate resilience: her story confirms it. The 39-year old came from Indonesia with her new husband, and three children from a previous marriage, five years ago.**

In a new land with few friends, life soon became desperate. Visda's husband isolated her and her children from the world. With little English or understanding of Australia, she struggled to break free from the suffocating control that was drawing tighter. Her dreams of a new life in Sydney became a nightmare.

Her husband negated the family's attempts to connect with the outside world. He tried to stop them making friends or talking with neighbours. Visda's Internet access was cut. Money was another source of control: Visda was only given \$150 a week to provide for the family. Eventually, she was not given any finance.

Yet Visda has faced many challenges through life. She was born into a Buddhist family of Chinese descent who, facing persecution from Muslim extremists, converted to Islam. The change of religion meant the Jakarta family avoided the violence and social unrest, which plagued the country in the late 1990s.

In this unstable social environment, it is amazing that Visda, aged 12, decided to become a Christian. Since then she has remained faithful to God, no matter what the circumstances.

She now has four children: Samuel (13), Britannia (10), Michael (5), and Viona (22 months). As she sits in the kitchen of her home in far western Sydney, she warmly remembers the times that God has surprised her.

“I am not always a faithful daughter but God is always faithful to me,” she said.

Her childhood was like an apprenticeship as she embraced duties well beyond her years. From the age of 12, she was managing her father’s database each day after school. Soon she was managing the payroll and negotiating with employees—and she felt the pressure.

“I prayed to God for the skill to manage employees so they wouldn’t leave the company,” she said.

Eventually, she completed a Diploma in Accounting at university and later managed a rice mill as well as the family business.

In Australia she was starved of money, so Visda looked for other income means to feed her family. She enrolled in an accounting course at TAFE to ensure she had an Australian qualification.

“He (her husband) never agreed to me studying,” she said. “He said if I went ahead, I would have to pay for it myself.”

Visda transferred the last of her savings from Indonesia to pay for the TAFE course. She knew it was a risk as she spoke little English but her determination drove her on.

God also had a surprise: as she was rushing across the street to catch a bus to TAFE, a car stopped in the middle of the road and the passenger’s door was flung open.

“Get in!” yelled the female driver.

Hesitant at first, Visda climbed in. The driver was Fiona, a fellow student from Visda’s accounting course.

Fiona recalls: “I used to notice her in class wearing the same clothes every day and I thought she may be struggling. The Lord had softened my heart and I began to drive her to TAFE.”

From that invitation, the two women became ‘like sisters’, who shared much on their way to class.

Increasingly, Visda’s husband was making it obvious that he felt no connection with the children. When she became pregnant, he even questioned the paternity of the baby. The accusation cut deep.

Tired of her husband’s unrelenting control and lack of love and commitment, Visda eventually decided to leave home with her children.

Visda could not imagine living in a home without a loving father. She wanted more for her children.

A clothesline whisper gave Visda hope. She heard from a concerned neighbour that there were services and assistance for women in her position. She quickly trawled the internet and found contact details for refuges, domestic violence counsellors and other support services.

Just as she input the last of the contact details into her phone, her internet connection went down. Her husband had again intervened.

Visda called a number of refuges but found no vacancies. At this point, she almost lost her faith. Doubts grew about the value of God’s love.

“I’m like Thomas,” she said, referring to the disciple who needed to see the wounds of Christ before he believed in the resurrection. “I need proof.”

She eventually found a refuge close to her children’s school and began to devise a departure plan without her husband’s knowledge.

Her friend Fiona was asked to help. Fiona rallied a group of women from her Bible study group to assist in the move.

A day was set and six women with four cars arrived at Visda’s family home.

“We rocked up, we prayed, we packed up the cars and we got out of there,” Fiona said.

Visda’s family was safe but living in a room in a refuge was generating new stresses. Visda again turned to God and prayed for a place that would cater for their needs.

With support payments from Centelink and her great money management skills, Visda found an affordable three-bedroom townhouse.

Isolated by their stepfather, Samuel, Britannia and Michael’s language and social skills were inadequate. Samuel was bullied at school because of his poor English.

It seemed the family had come a long way, yet there was another hurdle. That is when Visda approached Wesley Brighter Futures Nepean and Case Worker, Mya Aye.

Wesley Brighter Futures is a program that provides support for families in crisis.



*“I am not always a faithful daughter but God is always faithful to me.”*

Mya said the children were willing to learn but they needed assistance.

"I helped in resolving issues at school while Visda found better ways to parent," he said.

Visda completed the 'Three Choices' in-home parenting program offered by the Wesley Brighter Futures team. Through the techniques taught in the program, she was able to provide her children with more support and guidance.

To end Samuel's bullying, Mya established a meeting with other school parents. Meanwhile, Michael was preparing for school while attending a childcare centre, two days a week.

Funded by Wesley Brighter Futures, centre staff worked closely with Michael to improve his learning and readiness for school.

Seeking to develop her writing skills, Britannia approached Mya. Mya encouraged her to do her best and seek help from the teacher when she needed it. She improved day-by-day, eventually winning a school award for a story she had written.

When Britannia accepted the award at a school ceremony, Mya and Visda were proudly watching.

"I was so very happy," said Visda. "And I was glad Mya was there."

Visda's own childhood challenges are a constant source of determination to see her own children grow and develop so they can embrace life's opportunities.

"My dad trained me to be strong and independent," she said. "And that's what I want for my children."

## Early intervention for families in need

Wesley Brighter Futures is a voluntary program that provides support to families with children under the age of nine, and during pregnancy. By addressing family concerns such as violence, drug and alcohol problems, parental mental health issues, learning difficulties, parenting difficulties and child behaviour issues, Wesley Brighter Futures is able to support families to promote the conditions for healthy child development and wellbeing.

### The program has five primary aims:

- reduce and prevent child abuse and neglect
- optimise long-term benefits for children
- strengthen parent-child relationships
- break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage
- reduce the possible future demand for services such as child protection or mental health services

### The way Wesley Brighter Futures achieves these aims is through:

- case management and support designed to identify and resolve child wellbeing issues
- parent education and mentoring programs
- supporting families to access good quality early childhood education

In 2012-13, 40 caseworkers provided support to 578 families and their children across Metro Western Sydney.

## For that person with everything...

**Buy a gift from the Wesley Gift Shop on behalf of friends or family to assist Aussies in need. Personalise the present with an attractive, complimentary Wesley Mission card that gives details of how the community is being helped.**



**Stationery set**  
Help disadvantaged kids do well at school and complete their work like other children.

\$25



**After school care**  
Ensure kids from struggling families are cared for while parents work or look for work.

\$30



**Lookin' good**  
A haircut can boost confidence and improve success when looking for employment and accommodation.

\$40



**Christmas lunch**  
Help struggling families celebrate Christmas together with a hamper full of food for a Christmas feast.

\$70



**School uniform**  
A clean, tidy uniform helps enthusiastic students from needy families focus on doing well at school.

\$150



**Staying in touch**  
\$30 pays for phone credit to enable a homeless family to call relatives and friends for support.

\$30



**Give the gift that gives twice. [wesleymission.org.au/gifts](http://wesleymission.org.au/gifts)**

**Do all the good you can** because every life matters

CF2938NOV13



# A mind-altering God

**Piya is a man feeling the pressure of his convictions. He once lived the high life, working as an ice and ecstasy 'cook' for a Sydney gang. He was no short order chef: he made enough money to regularly fund a week at the Hilton Hotel and buy the latest designer fashions.**

He now lives in a share house with several other former homeless men at Maroubra in Sydney's south. He has little privacy: his bed is in the middle of the lounge room with a hung bed sheet separating him from the rest of the boarders. His clothes are ragged and the only food cooking in the house are the sausages and mash he serves up to his housemates.

He had big dreams when the drug money was rolling in. Everything changed when a deal went wrong convicting him to leave the gang and the lucrative drug trade—and live homeless on the streets of Sydney for years. It was on the cold streets of Sydney, sleeping in the open, that the story of Jesus resonated with him.

"I used to have the power, the money, and the women," he said. "Now I live on \$260 a week."

"I'm thankful now to have a roof over my head and people helping me but I'm struggling big-time with this new life."

His Christian faith is a bastion against the old ways.

"God will take care of me now," Piya said.

Money and power were furthest from his mind when he entered the illegal drug industry. His decision was fuelled by an intense hatred of his mother and unresolved issues from childhood.

Piya was born in Thailand but when aged five, his mother married a British man and headed to Australia to establish a family home and a new life. With a promise to return for him, she left Piya with his grandfather. Piya felt "absolutely abandoned" until his mother's return to Thailand during his teenage years.

When Piya arrived at the new family home in the Blue Mountains, he was brimming with stored anger. To add to his sense of abandonment, his mother and his stepfather were busy with work and were rarely at home.

To square the emotional ledger with his mother, he began selling speed. He told his mother about his dealings. Perhaps through a mix of guilt and loyalty, she helped him hide his crimes from the police.



**“I’m thankful now to have a roof over my head and people helping me but I’m struggling big-time with this new life.”**

This did nothing to ease his hate for her, even as he entered his twenties. When she became seriously ill, he continued his vindictiveness.

“I told her I wished she would die,” he said.

What Piya did not know was that his mother was terminally ill. A week later, she died in hospital. An intense dark cloud of guilt closed in on him.

Piya felt the force of his family’s fury. His grandfather flew from Thailand but disowned him after the funeral service.

“He said I had better leave the family alone,” Piya recalls. “In Thai culture, that means the family is totally cutting its connection with you.”

Piya felt the loss of his family and was now alone.

His loneliness was short-lived. One night in a CBD bar, he went to the rescue of an Indonesian man who was being beaten. The man he saved, Sam\*, became his mentor, providing advice and money. He also introduced Piya to a group of other young Asian men who became his close friends. Piya had found a father figure and a ‘family’ he was yearning for. The family, however, had a secret.

On a visit to Thailand, Piya learned how to make ice and ecstasy. Sam grinned when he learned of Piya’s new skills. He revealed to Piya that he was the leader of a criminal gang and the other young men were its members.

Today, Piya keeps clear of the areas where the gang once traded: Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Newtown, Surry Hills and Chinatown. He fears being lured back into his old life by the promise of easy cash. However, it was in the glare of the neon

lights that Piya’s plans to continue his work as a ‘cook’ would end.

One night a man in his early 20s in an Oxford Street bar bought drugs that Piya had made. Piya was in the club watching the deal go down. He will never forget what he saw.

“I knew how strong the product was,” he said. “But I didn’t know the gang sold him double the usual dose.”

The man was soon lying on the pavement outside the club frothing at the mouth. Nearby paramedics rushed to his aid. He was close to death. The impact of Piya’s years as a drug maker hit home, shaking him to the core.

“I had a broken heart and broken soul because I could see all the people who had been hurt by the gang,” he said.

Piya decided to leave the gang but was worried they might murder him. He eventually moved out of his beachside apartment and ‘disappeared’ onto the streets. With his illicit income gone, he was forced to sleep amid the stench of the Central Station toilets and beg for food.

He eventually found a safe place to live at Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge not far from Central Station. The centre also provided three meals a day and a dedicated caseworker. It was a welcome relief.

While Piya had a roof over his head, he was haunted by the guilt of his mother and the treatment of others. Just when he thought he would never find peace, a meeting with a Christian on the streets of Sydney changed his life.

Michael Tang, Youth Pastor at the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Surry Hills, and his team of dedicated volunteers

have for the past 13 years offered food and the gospel to the city's homeless amid the grit of the bus interchange at Central Station. It was here, under the blackened sandstone arches, that Michael first talked with Piya.

"We don't do anything flash, just sandwiches," said Michael. "Most people really just want to talk."

When Piya asked Michael for one of the sandwiches, he was surprised by the pastor's response.

"Michael said he could give me food but he would also like to give me a relationship with God," Piya said.

During the next few months, Michael invited him to a Bible study group. He finally accepted.

"I heard all these stories about the life of Jesus," Piya said. "He had no shelter, no money, but he was still there for his community. I wanted to lead a life like him."

Faith brought Piya a sense of peace and it was something he wanted to share with others. He had successfully hidden himself from the gang but now he decided to approach them to talk about his newfound faith and the damage their business was doing.

"Within six months, most of us had decided we wanted to go up to heaven and to commit to Jesus," he said. "The whole gang collapsed."

The gang's leader, Sam, watched as his underlings became more interested in prayer and less in drug payloads. Piya was fearful of what Sam might do, but with the courage of his faith, he decided to challenge Sam to leave his old ways behind.

In a smoky, crowded restaurant in Chinatown, Piya broke bread with Sam. He talked to him about how everything the gang had done was motivated by pure greed.

"I told him, 'We can have a good time without taking drugs and destroying people. We can just be like normal human beings and go out for coffee and play snooker'," said Piya.

"He hasn't changed his ways yet but he saw my point that 'enough is enough'."

Piya has only once returned to the gang's night club. As the club resounded to the latest beats, the young staff members bowed to him as a gesture of respect.

"It's respect, but it's respect for the dark side: the dirty money and the drugs," he said. "I now walk on the light side with Christ."

Piya is passionate about his faith and has the resilience to walk the narrow and difficult path. However as his life of poverty continues to bite, his resolve is tested.

In his commitment to Jesus, Piya has faced-down much of his guilt and resolved many personal issues. However, in a rare moment of privacy recently, he tearfully remembered the mother he once hated.

"I know God has forgiven me," Piya said. "But I cannot forgive myself."

\*Name changed for legal reasons

**Sunday December 22**  
The Rev Rick Dacey is interviewed about the real meaning of Advent

**Wednesday December 25**  
The new Anglican Archbishop of Sydney Glenn Davies shares the real message of Christmas

**Sunday December 29**  
Former Hope 103.2 radio host Sheridan Voysey discusses his Resurrection Year

**wesley impact tv**

5.30 am Channel 9  
7.30 am Australian Christian Channel

CF2938NOV13



# Matthew

## Christmas – the wrong way – with the Rev Dr Keith V Garner

I have always found it challenging to prepare a meaningful message for children in church. My heart sank, therefore, when I heard the story of a message that went wrong for Charles who had a real gift for communicating in this way. On the Sunday before Christmas, he invited four children to help him tell the story of the star of Bethlehem. At a given signal, each child was to flip over a large piece of cardboard spelling, for all to see, the word STAR. Unfortunately, the children got in reverse order and when the cards were flipped over, the word revealed was RATS!

This 'object lesson' took the whole Christmas congregation by surprise. However, there is more than a pinch of truth in that mistaken message of RATS. Christmas is not an easy time of the year. There can be frustration, disappointment and stress connected with this special season. It is intensified by very hot days and the impending summer break. However, Christmas always takes place in a world that has things the wrong way round. If only we were able to turn Christmas the right way, we would be a channel to bring healing, meaning and purpose back into the world.

### Christmas is often filled with grief

The Old Testament prophet reminds us: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." <sup>1</sup> Christmas ought to be a time of light and joy, as it was for the Magi who followed

the star. For many people, Christmas is a time when the difficult experiences of life can become even more distressing. Tennyson wrote,

"With such compelling cause to grieve

How dare we keep our Christmas Eve." <sup>2</sup>

Matthew's gospel seems to point to the contrasting elements in the story. It is in Matthew 2 that we read of the flight into Egypt, which had long been a place of refuge for Jews. The same chapter tells of what we know as the 'slaughter of the innocents'. Michael Green concludes, "The whole unsavoury story of Herod's activity in all this is an awesome reminder of how deeply opposition to Jesus can be rooted in the hearts of people who are not prepared to allow his gentle rule to control them. If we are determined to get our own way at all costs, we will go to any lengths to eliminate all trace of Jesus and his claim on our lives." <sup>3</sup>

### Christmas can wrongly be a focus for greed

It is a tragic irony that the season of the year that tells us of the great gift of God in Jesus Christ has become a time when the focus appears to be on 'getting' rather than 'giving'. Christmas can be the wrong way round here. Another amusing story is of the family who every year put big wooden letters on their roof to spell NOEL. You might have guessed



# 2:10

already ... they placed the letters in the wrong order and people read LEON as they passed by. Our greed turns to giving when we realise that God has completely spun our lives around. "For God so loved the world that he gave ..." <sup>4</sup>

According to the gospel, there was no room for Mary and Joseph when they arrived in Jerusalem. This was not going to be the peaceful scene of a children's nativity; instead of a stable, on that first night it may have been a cave, which provided shelter for the young Messiah.

Although Josephus, the Jewish historian, does not refer to the slaughter of the innocent children, David Hill is correct in suggesting the thought that "... it is in accordance with what we know of Herod's character." <sup>5</sup>

It is repulsive to allow Christmas to become a season of greed.

## **Christmas may be called a season of grace**

At Wesley Mission, we take seriously our task of bringing hope to people's lives. Such hope needs to articulate in the specifics of life and not in mere platitudes. For this reason, I am always delighted that so many of our people are busy throughout the Christmas season, seeking to offer care and compassion to people who are in need.

At the heart of our hope at Christmas is the news that God has granted us purpose and a new beginning through the gift

of His Son. The gift of Christ is for the entire world not just one nation of people. We are told that when Herod heard the news from the Magi, he was deeply troubled and "all Jerusalem" with him. This was not because "most of the people would have been sorry to see Herod replaced or because they were reluctant to see the coming of King Messiah, but because they well knew that any question like the Magi's would result in more cruelty from the ailing Herod." <sup>6</sup> King Herod's paranoia had already led him to murder his wife and two sons.

Let us rediscover the message of joy at Christmas and be lifted from grief and greed to a new level of experience, established through God's grace.

One final word turned the wrong way emerged when a recovering alcoholic named his new business REBOS—that is sober spelled backwards—a reminder that Jesus Christ had turned his life around and given him hope in the midst of his messy life.

There is no greater and more wonderful news than that which announces the birth of a Saviour for an ailing world. Sit down this Christmas and listen to Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus. Discover what it meant for him and then make your way to offer him your life. How you come to Jesus does not matter but it is important that you do!

— **Rev Dr Keith V Garner**

1. Isaiah 9:2
2. Tennyson, Alfred Lord, *The Eve of Christmas*.
3. Green, Michael, *The Message of Matthew*, IVP, p.72.
4. John 3:16
5. Hill, David, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Eerdmans, p.85.
6. Carson, D A, *Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, p.86.

# Big



# city



# Tiny



# Tots

**On any Thursday at the Wesley Conference Centre, you will see a lively group of mothers and children chatting in a variety of languages. They are part of the Tiny Tots playgroup, which began at Wesley Mission four years ago.**

"Many of these families have moved to Sydney from countries such as Indonesia and Thailand," said founder of the group and Wesley International Congregation (WIC) member Elisa Schut. "The wives and children follow the husbands who come to Sydney for work and live in the CBD.

"Being a mum in a new country can be very isolating."

One of the 25 mothers who enjoy the rapport and support is 32 year-old Tiffany Kurniawan. As a child, Tiffany moved from Indonesia to Australia with her parents. Her family has been part of WIC for 15 years.

"All the mums feel at home in the group," she said. "We share parenting tips, talk about the hardships and become friends."

Wesley Mission's Superintendent, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, underlined how important it is for people to find meaningful friendships when they come to Australia. "This can make such a difference to their lives," he said.

Anna is originally from Thailand and has been in Australia for 10 years. While she has tried another playgroup in the city, she said her son Harrex enjoys Tiny Tots more.

"There is more activity and more toys so Harrex gets involved more quickly each time and overcomes his shyness," she said.

"All the mums are very friendly here too."

The idea of a playgroup began when Elisa was a first-time mother. When her daughter Lilah was 18 months, Elisa went to Hillsong's Colour conference for women.

"One of the guest speakers Donna Crouch said, 'You might think that you're a young mum and can't do anything for the Kingdom of God but that's a wrong assumption'," said Elisa.

Elisa was moved by a survey of GPs conducted by Crouch's team about what churches could do to support families. A consistent answer from GPs was 'start a playgroup'. Playgroups reduce rates of post-natal depression and isolation.

Elisa confesses she never felt like a 'kid-person' and running a playgroup was never part of her plans. Born in the U.K. to Malaysian-Chinese parents, Elisa became a professional dancer and was a cast member of the West End production of The King and I. She also performed in the U.S. and taught dance in New York.

However, Elisa and her husband, Wesley Mission Youth Pastor Cory Schut, began Tiny Tots in a meeting room in the Wesley Congregational Life offices and it grew from there. She said the group had achieved many things but the most outstanding activity was the mums-only dinners.

"Especially in Asian families, mothers do all the house work and taking care of the children," she said. "So for mums to be able to leave the kids with dad just for one night is a big thing."

Some of the mothers are regulars at WIC while others have not been to church since their children arrived.

Elisa said Tiny Tots gave mothers, and their children, a chance to connect with a church community and the opportunity to share their concerns, knowledge and skills.

**"You might think that you're a young mum and can't do anything for the Kingdom of God but that's a wrong assumption"**

"We want the mums and children to know the love of God and Tiny Tots is a way of connecting with the community. It's an opportunity to come into the presence of God knowing that He loves them," she said.

Elisa said the ministry had taken her outside of her own comfort zone and made her more reliant upon God.

"He also gave me a heart for the families living in the CBD and has shown His love and care by providing a team of mums to serve alongside me," she said.

Dr Garner said Tiny Tots was a great example of how Wesley Mission cared for families. "Here is another small but positive way in which the Wesley Centre becomes a focus for Christian ministry in reaching out to young families," he said.



## **Ever considered becoming a foster carer?**

Wesley Mission is currently on the lookout for some very special people: singles and couples who are keen to provide a safe and caring temporary or permanent home for school-aged children desperately in need of foster care.

If you think this might be you, Wesley Dalmar would love to have a chat. For more information, simply call 1300 325 627 today.

[wesleymission.org.au/wesleydalmar](http://wesleymission.org.au/wesleydalmar)



## 01. John Wesley documentary wins awards

*John Wesley—The man and his mission*, a documentary on the life of the great evangelist produced by Wesley Mission has been awarded at both the 2013 San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival and the 2013 International Christian Film Festival.

In February 2013, the documentary was a semi-finalist at the 2013 San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival.

Following quickly on this success, it was awarded third place in the International Christian Film Festival.

Wesley Mission's CEO, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, said producing *John Wesley—The man and his mission* was one way that Wesley Mission was remembering 200 years of Methodism in Australia.

"John Wesley changed the world with his intrepid evangelism, passion for the Gospel and social activism," said Dr Garner.

"The documentary captures the spirit of the man and his times.

"Its success is a testament to Wesley Mission's production team."

The documentary has also been selected to screen at the UK Christian Film Festival and is being screened throughout 2013.

It was shot at a variety of important historical locations in Britain.

The DVD can be purchased for \$19.95 from [wesleymission.org.au](http://wesleymission.org.au).

## 02. Youth program for Western Sydney

Wesley Mission is delivering a new early intervention and prevention program to improve the lives of 9–15 year olds in Western Sydney.

The Youth Hope program will reach out to children and young people who are vulnerable or at risk of significant harm because of neglect, homelessness, domestic violence or drug and alcohol use. It will be provided through Wesley Brighter Futures.

NSW Minister for Family and Community Services, Pru Goward, said the program would prevent a growing number of vulnerable older children and young people from being caught up in the child protection system. It will also keep them engaged in education and training.

"Vulnerable young people who access Youth Hope services are likely to receive a different type of support depending on what works for them," Ms Goward said.

Wesley Mission Superintendent the Rev Dr Keith Garner said Wesley Mission was delighted that Wesley Mission had been chosen to deliver the program in Western Sydney and the Nepean–Blue Mountains districts.

"Wesley Mission is well aware through its service experience and evidence-based research that early intervention and prevention is a vital strategy in giving families and young people hope for the future," Dr Garner said.

01. John Wesley documentary shooting on location



03. Record cut: Sean Collins of Canada helps make history



### 03. Snip goes a world record

A new Guinness world record for the number of haircuts completed in eight hours was set in Sydney in August at a Wesley Mission event.

Sixteen of Just Cuts leading hairdressers flew in from around Australia to cut the hair of 409 people at Martin Place, smashing the existing world record by 50. Wesley Haircut for homelessness publicly elevated the issue of homelessness and the experiences of homeless people while raising much needed funds.

Sean Collins from Niagara Falls, Canada, was the 360th person to have a haircut and in so doing shattered the record.

“I haven’t had a haircut in seven months so I guess I qualify,” he quipped.

The record attempt began at 9 am and finished at 5 pm with 409 haircuts counted by the official adjudicators, Schwarzkopf Professional stylists, and supported by Hope103.

The CEO of Wesley Mission the Rev Dr Keith Garner said the event was more than just a world record but an opportunity to put homelessness in the public eye.

“You’ve done a wonderful job but you also have been part of something special, especially for those people who are homeless and disadvantaged,” Dr Garner said as he thanked Just Cuts hairdressers and event organisers.

### 04. Remembering the unfinished symphonies

There were some powerful words spoken to the gathered hundreds at the annual Wesley LifeForce Suicide Memorial Day at the Sydney Opera House on 12 September to remember those lost to suicide in a spirit of comfort and hope.

Wesley Mission’s CEO, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, talked about the imperfection of life and how we should remember the good and the bad of the relationships with loved ones lost through suicide in order to do them justice.

“Death rarely allows for clean goodbyes,” he said. “There are many unfinished symphonies in life.”

Raylee Taylor was also one of speakers at the service. The loss of her son to suicide motivated her to establish suicide prevention programs and produce training and information materials as the founder and chair of Care for Life: Suicide Prevention Association.

Raylee said that she had many unanswered questions after her son’s death.

“Going to lectures and getting involved in suicide prevention was my way of answering some of those questions,” she said.

Actor Paula Duncan led people in the sunflower ceremony before the service finished with a blessing from the Rev Rick Dacey and with Carol Garner releasing a dove.

## Wesley Seniors Living – it’s about the people and the lifestyle

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Our independent living villages offer residents a range of lifestyle and leisure activities to suit their interests. With villages located across Sydney, our residents continue to live active lifestyles within a safe and caring community they can call home.



For more information call Adam Lotherington at Wesley Seniors Living on 0423 024 170 or visit [wesleymission.org.au](http://wesleymission.org.au)



## 05. Program wins MoneySmart award

Wesley Mission's financial literacy program, *In charge of my money*, received a Highly Commended at the 2013 MoneySmart Week awards. The awards are part of the MoneySmart initiative of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC), which are sponsored by organisations such as the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia.

More than 1,200 people participated in *In charge of my money* during 2012–13. Wesley Mission CEO the Rev Dr Keith Garner said Wesley Mission was delighted to receive the award.

"Wesley Mission was a pioneer of financial counselling in Australia and has always looked to provide innovative services to the community," he said. "We all want to see Australians managing their finances: the individual and social cost of not doing so is far too high. Like all social issues, financial stress has ramifications that go far beyond the core problem of a lack of dollars and cents. This award also underlines the support St. George Bank has given to the program and our ongoing partnership."

Wesley Mission launched *In charge of my money*, a combination of course work and counselling, in August 2011 with funding from St. George Bank. *In charge of my money* is offered to people in community organisations, refuges and rehabilitation centres as a way of helping individuals to become financially independent.

## 06. Volunteer awarded Order of Australia

Andrew Downie was born with vision impairment and went completely blind at 15.

However, this has not stopped him from being a Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporter.

Earlier this year he was awarded the Order of Australia for his decades of volunteering for Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland and for helping Lifeline develop its systems so that visually impaired people can be Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporters.

Joining Lifeline in 1971, Andrew has assisted thousands of callers to Lifeline both as Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporter and as a supervisor.

Until 2007 Andrew utilised software on his own computer to assist in taking calls, making referrals and writing reports.

In 2008, Andrew reluctantly withdrew from telephone counselling when a new telephone system was introduced.

The new system was not user friendly for those who were either blind or visually impaired. However, Andrew continued as a Supervisor-on-Call.

In 2012, Andrew became a member of a Lifeline Australia working group that began exploring technologies to make the Lifeline telephone system accessible to the blind and vision impaired.

05. MoneySmart winners: the team from Wesley Mission



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# Wesley Impact! reader survey results

As we are continually improving *Wesley Impact!* it is important to know what our readers think of the magazine. We recently surveyed readers gathering their views on subjects such as content and stories to their opinions about layout and design. Thank you for all those people who responded. It's great to know you care so much about Wesley Mission, the magazine and the ministries we conduct in God's name. Below are some of the key findings from the survey.

— Graeme Cole, Editor

"I feel *Wesley Impact!* has struck a very good balance."

93 per cent say the magazine shows how Wesley Mission is making a difference

"I enjoy stories of the programs available and how they have changed people."

95 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the layout

"I think *Wesley Impact!* is an excellent publication. It speaks of Christian love and compassion."

96 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with photos

90 per cent of readers were satisfied or very satisfied with *Wesley Impact!*

Changed lives stories and Wordwise were the most popular parts of the magazine

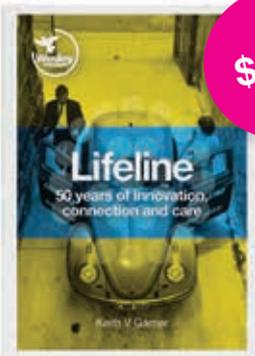
## Great Christmas gift ideas

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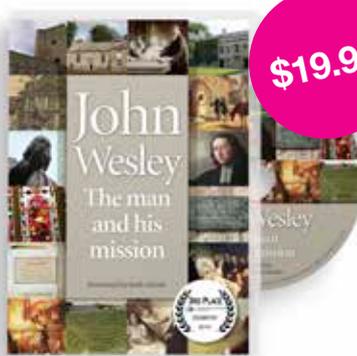


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