



wesley impact!

Easter 2018

Gambling Counselling
**Freeing Maree
from fear**

Credit reform
**Government acts
on Wesley Mission
recommendation**

**From
Heartbreak to
Homecoming**



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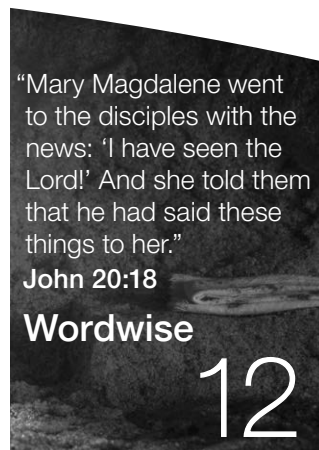
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Wesley Mission is a part of the Uniting Church
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Wesley Impact! is the magazine of Wesley Mission,
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**“He went away, wondering to
himself what had happened.”**

Luke 24:12



Hello

At Easter we remind ourselves that the risen power of Jesus Christ is able to change lives.

It transforms the old into new, fear into hope and bitterness into love. It gives us meaning and purpose. This message is not for the select few but is available to all who would open their hearts and lives to the transforming power of God.

The cross is not merely a reminder of what happened at Easter, but a continuing reality of what God is doing in his world for us now as he comes alongside to enable us to undergo a complete change of life. It could be considered to be a mark of the Christian community at its best when it offers this hope which in turn is channelled into purpose.

This resolve inspires people to know that they are valued, gives confidence that they can make a difference and reassures them that they are not alone. It is at the heart of genuine compassion and the cornerstone of the Word and deed ministry at Wesley Mission.

In this edition of *Wesley Impact!* you will read two stories where lives have been given hope and purpose by the compassionate and life-changing work and ministry of Wesley Mission.

Sarah had many challenges in her life. Apart from medical and mental health issues, she battled a drug addiction and low self-esteem. The young mother of two had other vital needs like securing safe shelter for her family. She found the answer at Wesley Noreen Towers. It is here that she also learnt life skills like cooking and budgeting, gained time to gather her family, planned for the future, and grew in confidence. Sarah and her family now live independently and their lives have changed for the better.

Gambling continues to be a scar on our nation. The cost of gambling is enormous not only in economic but in social terms. People are too often driven over the edge by gambling debts. A dabble on the pokies can soon translate into a life of misery, guilt and heartache, as with the case of Maree who came to Wesley Mission for counsel after she stole money from her employer to fund her gambling habit.

Facing a gaol sentence for her crime she also reached out to our Wesley Community Legal Service for support. Some people in the community may wonder why we offer such a unique service. It is because many of the hundreds we help each year have a gambling addiction and end up in court overcome by debt or actions they regret.

As a community we need to do more than condemn and punish problem gamblers but help them deal with the underlying issues and causes while giving them the skills and confidence to build a new life free from guilt and shame.

I trust that as you move through **Lent**—and Easter when it comes—that it will speak powerfully to you of the compassion of Jesus Christ and the new life He brings.

Keith V Garner

Rev Keith V Garner AM
Superintendent/CEO
Wesley Mission



**For more visit
Rev Dr Keith
Garner's blog**

**“This message
is not for the
select few but
is available to all
who would open
their hearts...”**



From heartbreak to homecoming

As tears welled up in Sarah's eyes, she paused momentarily, struggling to describe her profound and life changing relationship with Wesley Mission worker, Pep.

"Pep really did want to help me turn my life around," she said after reflection.

Pep listened intently to the young woman who articulated a personal truth realised by her compassion and care. "Even with everything she's been through... she's one of my success stories," Pep said.

However success and hope were far from Sarah's mind when she was diagnosed with a form of epilepsy at age 21.

Sarah's illness began to deeply impact her life. She could no longer study, work or even drive. Deep doubts about her future were a constant shadow.

Following two bouts of brain surgery, Sarah was assured by her doctor that she would be free of any future epileptic seizures. She could resume her business studies at TAFE and life would return to the way it was prior to her diagnosis.

However, just three months after this confident decree, Sarah had a seizure—the first since her last surgery. It was a New Year's Eve rocket that struck at the heart of her new-found hope.

"I just gave up. I think I was so disappointed... I didn't want to come back and see the neurologist," Sarah said.

Feeling lost and desperate, Sarah began experimenting with illegal drugs to numb the emotional pain, alongside her partner and father of her two children, April and Aiden, who are now eight and two.

"We tried a lot of times to quit by ourselves," she said. "We didn't go to a clinic, just trying to do it ourselves and it didn't work."

Her angst was heightened when Sarah became pregnant with Aiden. In another attempt to stop taking drugs, Sarah and her partner moved in with his mother.

"She said she was going to help us get off the thing but we couldn't," she said.

After Aiden was born, the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) removed Sarah and her partner's children from their care. They were given a choice: stop using drugs or their children would not be

returned. For Sarah, getting her children back became her all-consuming focus.

Determined to restore her family, Sarah entered a six-month rehabilitation centre. While sceptical at first, Sarah quickly found the treatment to be beneficial and her life improved and progressed.

"I didn't think much of it (rehab). I didn't believe in it," she said. "But once I was there, it wasn't just medication, they helped you mentally and they say how to control temptations... it gave me a lot of hope."

While Sarah's lot was finally improving, some very practical needs had to be addressed.

Sarah was without a home. In order to leave rehabilitation and for her children to be returned to her care, Sarah was required to find stable accommodation.

She found the answer at Wesley Mission.

Pep, from **Wesley Specialist Homelessness Services**, organised a place for Sarah and her two children at **Wesley Mission's Noreen Towers**, a supported accommodation centre for families who are homeless.

"I didn't think much of it (rehab). I didn't believe in it," she said. "But once I was there, it wasn't just medication, they helped you mentally and they say how to control temptations... it gave me a lot of hope."

After Sarah’s first meeting with Pep, she moved into her new home just a week later. The following day, April was released into Sarah’s custody. Shortly after, Aiden also moved into their new home.

Sarah’s goal was complete—her family was restored. During times of transition people can be vulnerable and challenged in many ways. For Sarah, Pep’s steadfast support and compassion was pivotal to her resilience.

During times of transition people can be vulnerable and challenged in many ways. For Sarah, Pep’s steadfast support and compassion was pivotal to her resilience.

“I was scared. I just felt like I was starting by myself... It didn’t take long until I felt happy again,” she said.

“Pep... helped me a lot throughout the beginning. Anything... even if it wasn’t to do with accommodation. I could just call and ask.”

Multiple, wrap-around community services played a critical role in the solution to Sarah’s longevity. This included a parenting program, setting up financial assistance with Centrelink and helping source furniture for her apartment at Wesley Noreen Towers.

“Before I started working at Wesley Mission I thought homelessness was that man in the park... And then I started working with families and you realise it’s about the kids, the parents that are struggling to find a job or cannot access public housing,” Pep said.

“That’s what homelessness is about, not being able to access the correct services to support you.

“Homelessness is not just about finding a house. It’s about independent living, parenting, budgeting and day-to-day living. If we don’t get that right [with our clients], they’re going to come back to us again—full circle because the cycle of homelessness just seems to go around in a circle. If we don’t get it right at the start, they’re just going to end up homeless again.

“Sarah was fortunate because she did have so many services to support her and everything fell into place at the right time.”

Before moving into Wesley Noreen Towers, Sarah struggled with the small things—having a conversation and following daily tasks. Now she is more confident and independent. Now Sarah can easily follow a schedule and sets up regular alarms on her mobile phone to remind her to take her medication and cook dinner for her children.

“Speaking to new people because of my sickness... I’m very forgetful and not very bright,” she said.

“So that’s why I don’t like to speak to people who are new. I get nervous. Now I’m more independent I guess, not as unreliable. Bit more confident because before I was really shy.”

Pep has noticed the personal growth and rise in confidence.

“From the first time I met her she was very shy and she was very quiet,” Pep said. “She got back her kids. A lot of people don’t. In six months she overcame the drugs... It’s a lot to take on when you’re a single mum. I didn’t do it. She did it herself.”

Sarah and her family stayed at Wesley Noreen Towers for 16 months before moving into long-term accommodation. It was here for the first time Sarah found a place she could call home.

“It felt like it was safe and April had friends,” she said. “There were kids around to play with. She still talks about it now, how much she misses Noreen Towers.”

As Sarah’s time drew to a close at Wesley Noreen Towers, Pep made it a priority to secure long-term housing for Sarah and her children. Within three months a freshly renovated house became available in an ideal location—across the road from a school where Sarah’s daughter now attends. Having a permanent home was integral to Sarah raising her family.

“I can never work and never study so my income is never going to change,” Sarah said. “It’s going to stay where it is and I’ll always need help with housing because I can’t rent privately.”

While Sarah continues to struggle with her physical health, she is confident about the future. Her positive attitude towards life is driven by her love for her two children. April and Aiden are at the centre of her world. And Sarah is now devoting her life to raising them.

Before moving into Wesley Noreen Towers, Sarah struggled with the small things—having a conversation and following daily tasks. Now she is more confident and independent.

“Raising my kids... that’s just what I’m concentrating on,” she said. “My goal is to stay normal like this and to always have my kids with me. I don’t want to go through the same path again.”

To find out more about Wesley Homeless Services, visit wesleymission.org.au ■

Wesley Noreen Towers

Wesley Noreen Towers provides transitional accommodation for up to 16 families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in south-western Sydney. The community includes self-contained three bedroom units with extensive lawns and gardens, children’s play equipment, and facilities for parenting programs, art and craft groups, and social activities.

The program aims to break the cycle of homelessness by providing high standard housing to meet immediate needs, working with families to find long-term housing, and assisting families to address the issues that have contributed to homelessness including drug abuse, domestic violence, financial issues and stress.

Family support workers use a person-centred strengths-based case management approach with the families. This strategy assists in addressing the causes of homelessness or the risk of homelessness while helping families to develop their independent living life skills.

Christine Adams, who heads up Wesley Mission’s Therapeutic Team which supports families who are homeless at Wesley Noreen Towers and other **Wesley Mission centres**, says compassion and grace are keys to building resilience and trust with families.

“You need to have a heart and a respect for people,” she said. “It’s a matter of respecting them where they are in the moment. The people we are often in contact with are not in a good place. But we know that this is just a place they are passing through—it’s part of their journey.

“My compassion comes from God. My inspiration is from Romans 15:13 ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’

“For me our work is about having hope and holding on to the hope for the people we contact and support.

“Grace and being gracious does make a difference but it’s being in a position to recognise that.”

Christine’s job is also about supporting the program’s frontline staff and she seeks to ensure that both the staff and the families engaging in the program are being uplifted.

“Our frontline staff need to hold on to hope so families can see there is something amazing beyond their current situation,” Christine said.

“You are always reminding families about how far they have come and acknowledging the things they have done.

“Quite often people have a view of themselves which is self-defeating because the wheels have fallen off their lives. But we quickly recognise and affirm where they have done well.



“They often have had very big lives and have been functioning and achieving very well. Often it’s just a set of circumstances that have led to their homelessness.

“Once they get options they are able to make decisions for their lives.

“Too frequently people don’t have the information or the options.

“We also help them develop and acquire more knowledge and abilities. This helps builds resilience. It helps them see the bigger picture so they fully integrate with the wider community.

“It helps them with their decision making about accessing resources in the community so they have the confidence to build a better and more liveable life.” ■

Fast Fact: 105,000 people in Australia are homeless. Despite media and public perceptions less than one in ten live rough on the streets. Most are couch surfing, staying with friends or family, or living in unstable accommodation like a caravan or boarding house.



Freeing Maree from judgment or fear

In a non-descript and rarefied Newcastle courtroom, Maree, contemplated her future.

The formality of legal proceedings, the hushed whispers and the sideways glances fed her anxiety and fear. There was no going back.

Her name was called from the bench and the culmination of a 30-year battle with a gambling addiction had reached its zenith and for Maree, its resolution.

Once the proud 2015 NRMA Manager of the Year for the Hunter, she had now become the hunted. What would her friends, family and workmates think? The journey to gaol was only minutes and metres away, yet such an experience was a grim

fantasy to be experienced much later. Her mind was now awash with shame from the media attention given to her high-profile case.

It was June 2017 and Maree was facing time in gaol. When she first began dabbling with poker machines, she never believed her urges and debts would have their sequel in the public gallery.

Many years before, Maree had attended Gamblers Anonymous and undertook a rehabilitation program. Her life began to turn the corner.

She had not gambled for 10 years but in early 2017 entrenched urges came

upon her again, firing up old anxieties and a quick fix to deal with unresolved trauma. Within a few months her poker machine debts had spiralled out of control and \$49,000 in cash had been stolen from an NRMA office.

"I was robbing Peter to pay Paul," Maree said. "I knew I would get caught. And then I did get caught. Maybe subconsciously I wanted it to end. I told my GP and she referred me to Wesley Mission. I look back now and I really think God was intervening."

Maree contacted Jodie Rollason, Principal Solicitor with **Wesley Community Legal Service**, who provided legal support.

It was at Wesley Mission that gambling counsellor, Martina Magnery, began the long process of working through Maree's issues of addiction while financial counsellor, Robyn Venness, helped her develop budgeting and financial management skills for life beyond gaol.

"Maree presented with symptoms in alignment with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)," Martina said of her initial meetings.

Maree was facing a 16 month sentence but both Martina and Robyn were looking far beyond the immediate by providing a holistic and integrated approach to rehabilitation and restoration. She attended about eight counselling sessions with Martina before attending her first court hearing in April 2017.

"I was a mess and suicidal," Maree said. "There were things I had not really dealt with in my life. Martina helped me with a lot of things."

Her case is not unique with more than 50 per cent of all fraud cases in Australia related to problem gambling. This is the figure that the poker machine giants, the hotels and clubs will never enunciate as part of their social contract with the community.

Maree is one of the brave few in Australia who seek help. Most struggle alone, too ashamed or fearful to do so.

"All problem gamblers have mental health issues of some sort. Usually there is a history of trauma that can include adverse life events," Martina said, who counsels up to 30 people a week.

"Problem gambling is a coping mechanism for many experiencing mental health issues. Most of the time the gambler has all intentions of paying back the money they owe, however, they get into a vicious cycle with their gambling and are quickly in over their heads."

It was the same for Maree. Loneliness, poor self-esteem and unresolved trauma had taken its toll but through

counselling, Maree was able to begin dealing with these issues.

Maree's gambling problems began at university costing her a teaching degree because she spent more time in front of the pokies than her lecturers. She estimates that she has lost more than \$500,000 during her lifetime.

"I didn't think I had a (gambling) problem but everyone around me did," Maree said. "It was my money and I could do what I wanted to do with it despite the fact I didn't have money to pay for food or rent. My parents would bail me out and then I'd go back and gamble again. When I played the poker machines I was in a zone where I didn't think or feel anything."

Despite her addiction, she secured a range of good paying and senior management jobs. "I was a very high functioning gambling addict," she said. "I did very well in all my jobs."

As an NRMA manager she was working 10 and 11 hour days. Her office was performing so well that the NRMA had considered trialling it as a regional call centre.

Maree had an ideal life, walking to work and living across the road from the beach. She cannot remember



Maree's sense of hope and confidence have increased dramatically.

what drew her back to her old and damaging ways.

In June last year Maree was sentenced to 16 months gaol with a non-parole period of 10 months. Jodie visited Maree while in custody at Raymond Terrace.

Her case is not unique with more than 50 per cent of all fraud cases in Australia related to problem gambling.

"I was a mess and my family members were beside themselves," she said. "Jodie helped settle me down."

During her time in Grafton gaol, Maree developed a friendship with the chaplain. She began asking questions about the Christian faith and warmly remembers their conversations.

An appeal was later lodged by Wesley Community Legal Service on Maree's behalf and was heard in Newcastle in August 2017.

As she travelled in a NSW Corrective Services van to attend her appeal, Maree was highly anxious and distinctly remembers a calm descending upon her resulting from a strong sense of the presence of Jesus Christ. Throughout her entire time in gaol, she felt that God had not abandoned her.

Following the success of the appeal, Maree's mum immediately booked counselling appointments with Martina and Robyn for the week of her release.

"This showed Maree's commitment to work on her issues and her confidence in us to help her through her ordeal," Martina said. "Contact was made with her creditors to put all matters on hold until her release."

Only a few months after the release from gaol, Maree began a Certificate III course in business administration (medical) at TAFE.

"I have seen Maree's sense of hope and confidence increase dramatically," Martina said. "She has come out of this awful experience a better person although she still shows great remorse for what she has done. She no longer gambles and is able to manage her gambling urges. She has plenty of goals and is a different woman from the one that she was."

Maree intends to continue to attend counselling and has set a new course in life thanks to Martina, Robyn and Jodie, who she credits with "saving her life". It's a job that is replicated hundreds of times each year by **Wesley Gambling and Financial Counselling Services** and **Wesley Community Legal Service**.

Martina adds a word of wisdom for those who judge harshly those struggling with addiction: "Never judge until you have walked in someone else's shoes. Our clients come to us because they know they are not coping. They are looking for hope, tools and strategies they can use to create a better, more purposeful life." ■

Recognising a gambling problem, getting help

If you are experiencing any of the following signs then it is time to reach out for help:

- adverse effects on personal wellbeing, relationships, finances and work performance gambling to excess
- repeatedly gambling beyond what a person can reasonably afford or would want to spend
- failure to control
- finding it difficult or impossible to stop gambling until all available funds have run out
- lifestyle impacts.

Wesley Gambling Counselling takes a holistic approach to gambling, where all aspects of problem gambling and its effects (personal, social, spiritual, mental, emotional, financial, legal and relational) can be addressed.



It is a free and individually tailored counselling program, which may include personal or financial counselling, family support and legal services.

Services are located in Sydney, Newcastle/Hunter and Wollongong. Call to book an appointment on 1300 827 638. ■

Time to speak out about cost of loss

Rev Keith Garner AM, Superintendent Wesley Mission

As gambling becomes more mainstream, the risk of problem gambling increases. Increased exposure to gambling advertising and opportunities for gambling are established risk factors for developing gambling problems. It is estimated that up to 500,000 people are at risk of problem gambling, or are problem gamblers.

"Problem gambling leads to a host of negative consequences: problems controlling money or time spent gambling, criminal behaviour, inability to pay for life's essentials, poor job performance or job loss and relationship and mental health problems.

"Through our work at Wesley Mission, I have encountered too many people whose lives and families have been devastated by problem gambling.

"Domestic violence, homelessness, crushing debt and family breakdown are all too common.

"It is time for leaders in government, business and civil society to take responsibility and consider the moral, ethical and social impacts of gambling and the marketing of gambling.

"While we point the finger at the US government's fear of the gun lobby, political parties of all persuasions are equally anxious about challenging our gambling sector.

"It's time for all of us to stand up and speak out to prevent the further normalisation of gambling." ■



Running from and to an empty tomb

with the **Rev Keith V Garner AM**

John 20:18

John, like the other gospel writers, begins his account of the resurrection with the discovery of an empty tomb. Mary Magdalene features at the centre of this discovery. She began her journey to the tomb of Jesus “while it was still dark” (v.1), at sometime between three and six o’clock in the morning. Mary arrived at the tomb and the implication of the text is that by the time she arrived it was light enough to see that the Lord’s body was no longer present in the tomb.

The earliest Christian preaching centres on the fact that the Lord had been raised and that he appeared to his disciples. However, what we meet at the outset of the telling of the account

is Mary’s sense of astonishment on discovering an empty tomb. The evidence would seem to indicate that the stone had been rolled back and that the body of Jesus Christ was nowhere to be found. She was alarmed at the possible implications and decides to seek help from the other disciples.

Mary runs to the disciples

There is a sense of haste as Mary runs to Peter and the beloved disciple, who we understand to be John. This communicates her sense of urgency. Gail O’Day articulates her reason for running, “Mary interprets the removal of the stone from the tomb as evidence that someone has stolen Jesus’ body.”¹ Grave robbers were not uncommon and there may have even been suspicion that perhaps the authorities had been involved.

Her running is almost undignified but the last thing in Mary’s mind was the thought of dignity or appearances. She represents the importance of women in relation to the resurrection. We know from Mark and Luke that

Mary and the women came to anoint the body of Jesus, but it is what Mary sees when she arrives at the tomb that is important in John. Mary came to the tomb expecting to find a body, “It is highly significant that Mary did not jump to the conclusion that Jesus had risen from the dead.”²

We see later in John 20:10-18 that Mary, in her encounter with One who she at first presumed to be the gardener, is a most valuable witness to the Risen Lord.

Peter and John run to the tomb

Mary’s urgent return to the disciples becomes the catalyst for them setting off to see for themselves. Paul Beasley-Murray, in his helpful work on the resurrection, writes, “Mary came running first to Peter, and then to John, the other disciple (v.2). The Greek phrasing implies that the two disciples were not together.”³ This would help to give understanding to the fact that the two were running and one appeared to outrun the other.

David Bartlett, in his exploration of the incident, reflected an important truth: “Those who detect a rivalry between

Peter and the Beloved Disciple... overlook the sheer narrative energy this passage manages to convey—and the ambiguity with which it concludes. Peter leaves for the tomb first, followed by the ‘other disciple’. Then, for a time, they are running together.”⁴

Peter may not have won the race to the tomb, but it is his eagerness, in typically brash fashion, to be the first to explore the empty tomb that strikes me as noteworthy. Peter, understandably, failed to make sense of what he saw and in Luke’s Gospel we read, “He went away, wondering to himself what had happened.” (Luke 24:12)

As we explore the arrival of Peter and John, it would be remiss of us if we failed to acknowledge that something different happened for John following Peter’s witness of the empty tomb. We read, “Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.” (v.8) There has been much deliberation about why John believed. We may ask, “Did he believe simply on the basis of the grave clothes, which had not been removed?”

Many young Christians have been helped by John Stott’s wonderful book designed to assist people in training for membership or confirmation. When describing the discovery of the grave clothes by the disciples, Stott uses a vivid image to suggest that what they saw was “like a discarded chrysalis from which the butterfly has emerged.”⁵ The clothes appeared undisturbed in a way that led one commentator to suggest it was as though Jesus’ body had simply passed through them “in much the same way that he later appeared in a locked room.”⁶ The beloved disciple John’s faith is certainly inferior to the faith that would ultimately inspire him and all who proclaimed the Risen Christ. However, an inferior faith is certainly not an indication of no faith (v.9).

The Easter message begins

The body that emerged from the grave clothes will not only stir John in a moment, but will also become the first step on a journey that will see the

earliest disciples and Christians in every age transformed through the power of the Risen Lord.

Immediately following this opening section in John 20, we may think it something of an anti-climax to read, “Then the disciples went back to their homes” (v.11). However, this serves to introduce the account of Mary who stayed outside the tomb and is weeping. These are not the tears of someone who is hysterical in any way, but rather they are the tears of someone whose life had been transformed and who truly knew what it was to love Jesus Christ.

N T Wright, in what I consider to be the best study on the resurrection, makes the point that “From the Prologue onwards... John has been putting down markers on a road of which Easter, not some ‘going to heaven after death’, is the intended destination.”⁷ Resurrection is not just a “happy ending” to a drama, but the very event that gives purpose to everything that has gone before.

Conjurors, optical illusions and the skill of film editors can deceive our eyes. When we find ourselves utterly surprised by something we observe, we may say, “I just couldn’t believe my eyes!” But the Easter narrative leads us to understand that believing is more than just seeing Jesus Christ that convinced the disciples. There would be a resurrection of faith in their lives that grows from what they saw and understood to have happened on that first Easter. Such faith helps us to perceive and believe that Jesus is risen and active today. It is this truth that lies at the core of all we do at Wesley Mission.

Rev Keith V Garner AM

1. O’Day, Gail, *The New Interpreter’s Bible, Volume 9*, Abingdon, p.840
2. Beasley-Murray, Paul, *The Message of the Resurrection*, IVP, p.84
3. Beasley-Murray, Paul, *The Message of the Resurrection*, IVP, p.85
4. Bartlett, David, *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 2*, WJK, p.373
5. Stott, John R W, *Basic Christianity*, IVP, p.54
6. Carson, D A, *The Gospel According to John*, IVP, p.637
7. Wright, N T, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, SPCK, p.447 ■

Doors open for young people at new Wesley Mission program



The official opening of Wesley Herring House and Wesley Lynford Lodge.

Young people aged 15-21 years leaving foster care and transitioning to adult life will have secure accommodation thanks to the refurbishment and renovation of two Wesley Mission buildings in Sydney's north-west.

Representatives of Wesley Mission, The Property Industry Foundation, Lendlease, and young people met together at Ermington to celebrate the official opening of the new premises—Wesley Herring House and Wesley Lynford Lodge—as part of the ground-breaking **Wesley Take Charge of Your Life program**.

It is a well-known fact that young people who leave foster care are less likely to enter tertiary education and have higher levels of unemployment and homelessness. Few have extended family support.

Young people living in the two buildings will receive 24-hour support and ongoing case management as they study or seek work, and learn life skills like

cooking and budgeting. By engaging with case workers, they will move into supported private accommodation and, eventually, gain full independence in the long-term.

“Just over 15 months ago we met at this same place sharing the dream of helping young people build better lives and preventing homelessness,” the CEO of Wesley Mission the Rev Keith Garner said at the opening.

“We are grateful for the support of the Property Industry Foundation PIF House Project and Lendlease who have committed more than \$800,000 to the renovation project and with a commitment of \$300,000 a year for five years to assist in the operation of the accommodation part of the program.

“We are also thankful for the support extended by many in the building and allied industries who donated their skills, resources and time to the project.

“We can now stand here today as one and enjoy the fruits of our committed work in response to a tangible and significant need in our community. Well-equipped, modern buildings like these will be a safe place for young people to flourish and grow.”

Property Industry Foundation CEO Rosemary Smithson said the project was vital to helping young people leaving foster care transition to independence.

“This is a great example of the property and construction industry working together through the Property Industry Foundation and with the community to help rebuild the lives of at-risk young people,” she said.

Lendlease General Manager NSW Building, Joel Stringer said Lendlease was delighted to have been able to help in refurbishing the buildings.

“Wesley Take Charge of Your Life is a great initiative and we wish the young people who will move into buildings every success in their new home,” he said.

There are 39,600 children in foster care in Australia. As they leave school, often early, these children generally also leave their foster parents and make an attempt to live independently as young adults.

The two buildings will provide a stable place to live while supporting continuity in other areas of life.

“Living in supported accommodation makes it more likely that a young person will complete high school or equivalent, go on to tertiary study with their friends and maintain important friendships and relationships,” Mr Garner said. ■

Government enacts Wesley Mission recommendations on credit reporting

A recommendation for positive credit reporting outlined in a Wesley Mission report on financial stress will become legislative reality from 1 July 2018.

Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison announced that banks will be forced to report not only negative information about a borrower's credit history but positive actions such as meeting monthly repayments or paying off a mortgage or car loan on time.

The Wesley Report, *Financial stress: The hidden human cost*, (May 2009) recommended that a national positive credit report system in a central database be created in order to encourage the maintenance of good credit records and sharing of information on such records. It also called for the government to be more proactive in regulating the client assessment criteria employed by lenders.

In 2014 a voluntary code of conduct for lenders to share credit information was introduced but there was little uptake by the banking and finance sector.

The positive credit initiative was introduced to protect consumers from using multiple credit cards and spiralling into uncontrollable debt. A point advocated by Wesley Mission.



However, the new legislation will make it mandatory for banks to cross check so to get the full picture of a person's debt and ability to repay before offering them credit.

Speaking on 2GB with its finance editor, Ross Greenwood, Wesley Mission CEO the Rev Keith Garner said the initiative was “long, long overdue”.

“This is excellent news,” Mr Garner said. “The banks and financial services area, historically, are extremely slow to respond to things as open as this.

“This is really good news not only for those in the situation of taking out loans but for those who are looking very closely at their finances. We are always dealing with people in financial stress but positive

reporting needs to be mandatory but the finance sector has been far too slow to act... so at last they are going to do something.

“We have people with 15 credit cards that we try to help. If you don't have this openness people just go in a downward cycle.

“There is evidence from the US that if you have positive reporting it actually makes a difference—it drops the default rate.

“I think the more open we are about this the better it is for those who are involved in lending and the better it is for our national debt. But most of all leading an organisation like Wesley Mission... this is about peoples' lives. They (the banks) have a responsibility to help people in trouble.” ■

Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there.

Mental illness isn't always easy to see.
1 in 4 people suffering from mental illness suffer in silence.

Talk to us on **1300 924 522** or

visit www.wesleymission.org.au/hospital to learn more about Wesley Hospitals Ashfield and Kogarah



Children participating in 'learn to surf sessions' were picking up new skills or enhancing their existing surfing abilities.

Riding a wave of care on the North Coast

The summer fun waves of Rainbow Beach at Bonny Hills were awash with young people during a Christmas celebration that drew together their foster carers and staff from Wesley Out of Home Care Taree.

It was all part of a special Christmas picnic held to say thank you to all Wesley Mission foster carers who help transform the lives of vulnerable children through daily support.

The picnic was an opportunity for foster carers and their children to unwind while connecting with other foster care families.

"It was a very relaxed day where children and their carers could swim, eat, play on the beach or mingle with each other. There was a wide variety of things to eat and plenty of refreshing drinks. We would definitely do it again," said Alex Matthews, **Wesley Dalmar Taree Program Manager**.

"We were very blessed by the donations and hampers. The kids were overwhelmed."

More than 50 children, 35 carers and 17 staff participated on the day and there was even a visit from Santa to hand out donated gifts to all the children.

Each carer also received a Christmas hamper as a way of saying thank you for their passion and commitment throughout the year.

Many of the children participated in a 'learn to surf session' picking up new skills or enhancing their existing surfing abilities. Staff members, Steve Muscardin and Scott Massey, spent two hours in the water helping children and young people conquer the swells.

"We were very blessed by the donations and hampers. The kids were overwhelmed."

The picnic was a great way to meet other carers and connect with their caseworkers in an informal and peaceful setting. The Bonny Hills Surf Life Saving Club provided its hall as well as lunch and refreshments for the children and their carers.

The event was one of many days Wesley Dalmar Taree holds to support foster care children and their foster parents. Picnic days are held in the spring holidays and recently a circus day, a singing lesson day and a respite camp at Karuah have been held.

Wesley Mission provides Out of Home Care services on the NSW mid-North Coast between Bulahdelah and Kempsey.

Currently there are 78 children and young people in care through Wesley Mission. This number is expected to increase to 90 this year. Demand for foster carers on the NSW mid-North Coast is high with the Department of Family and Community Services seeking to place another 30 children in the region.

Mr Mathews said Wesley Dalmar was always on the lookout for more foster carers to meet this increasing demand.

Information days called Shared stories, Shared lives are held on weekends so interested parents and families can better understand the joys and challenges of being a foster carer.

To find out more about becoming a foster carer contact Wesley Dalmar at: dalmaroohcenquiries@wesleymission.org.au. ■

Contribution of police acknowledged by Superintendent at awards night



The Rev Keith Garner (left) and NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller (right) present Senior Constable Glenn Lackenby with the NSW Police Officer of the Year award.

Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Keith Garner, presented the Rotary Clubs of NSW Police Officer of the Year Award 2017 at a gala dinner at the Hyatt Regency, Sydney recently.

Along with Mick J Fuller APM, the Commissioner of Police, Mr Garner spoke of the contribution of Senior Constable Glenn Lackenby who has served in the isolated community of Tibooburra, 1,500 kilometres from Sydney. He was also named Field Operations Police Officer of the Year.

Mr Garner spoke of the Senior

Constable's commitment to not only his job but the community.

"When he's not grading the local airstrip and clearing kangaroos so the Flying Doctor can land day or night, he performs duties such as searching for wayward tourists, attending road accidents, firearms and licensing enforcement and a whole range of community engagement," Mr Garner said of the police officer from the Barrier Local Area Command.

Mr Garner also paid tribute to the many police officers who serve

the community in so many diverse ways.

In his role as President-Elect of Sydney Rotary Club, he was pleased to make the award presentation and acknowledge the importance of such commitment. The event was attended by 700 police officers their families and friends.

Rotary Clubs of NSW and the NSW Police Force recognise professional excellence and dedication of service by officers and civilian staff at the NSW Police Officer of the Year awards.

"These men and women lead our community by example, and continue to perform their respective duties with commitment and passion to ensure they go above and beyond," Commissioner Fuller said.

"Every member of NSW Police Force is faced with challenging jobs each day, and their commitment to public safety is something to be proud of." ■

Easter sunrise service

Join us as we **celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ** at the sunrise service

**6 am Sunday 1 April
Sydney Opera House**

The service will be broadcast live on Channel 9 at 6 am till 7 am and Hope 103.2 FM



Hands on robotics looks to the future

It may look like a sci-fi scene out of Star Wars but for children from Wesley Dalmar the future was firmly in their hands as they participated in a robotic coding camp organised by the Commonwealth Bank and Robokids.

The children were invited to the event as part of the CommBank's engagement with young people following its recent report on Jobs and Skills of the future which examined the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Skills (STEM) skills shortage in Australia.

"One of the ways we are doing this is by partnering with our not for

profit clients to deliver unique and engaging experiences for young people who may not have access to these emerging technologies in their schools," said the CommBank's Head of Schools and Not for Profit Banking, Banking Strategy, Julianne Price.

"During the full day session 15 children and young people were

given a series of challenges to solve and were guided by the energetic facilitators to create their own program designs to solve the challenges."

The children also had a fun meeting Chip CANdroid, CommBank's humanoid robot and hearing from the Lab team about social robots.

The camp aims to equip young people with the innovation and technological skills that they need to thrive in the exciting, digitised, globalised, automated and ever changing world that lies ahead of them.

Chris Halliday from Wesley Dalmar said the children had a wonderful and engaging day.

"It was great watching them work in teams and working to each other's strengths," he said.

"The other great thing about the Lab was that it was showing the kids how technology is being put to the commercial world.

"Robots are not just about building cars, augmented reality will not just be about gaming and multi-touch tables are not just a novelty.

"I was able to talk to them about jobs that don't exist now but are on the immediate horizon; like human robotic interface consultants, augmented reality designers etc.

"And because the event had teams in meetings I was able to say 'hey look at these people meeting, this is happening now'.

"A big part of my job is giving these kids a sense of potential when they become adults." ■



Children had fun meeting Chip CANdroid, CommBank's humanoid robot.

New senior pastor a servant leader

Pastor Andy Chin has been part of the Wesley Mission family for all his life so it came as no surprise when a large number of family, friends and colleagues came together to share in his commissioning as the new Senior Pastor of Wesley International Congregation at a service at the Wesley Centre, Sydney.



Rev Andy Chin commissioned as Senior Pastor of Wesley International Congregation.

Andy came to Christian faith while attending the Wesley International Congregation (WIC) and during the past 15 years has served as a WIC staff member in various ministry leadership roles. He now leads that same congregation as the Senior Pastor.

"I consider this such an honour. This is where I came to faith as a young man—coming in broken and finding grace," Andy said.

Andy was commissioned by a representative from the Sydney Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia, the Rev Ken Day from St Stephen's Uniting Church.

Wesley Mission's Superintendent, the Rev Dr Keith Garner and the Senior Minister of Wesley Congregational Life, the Rev Dr Rick Dacey, spoke of Andy's gifts, his heart for ministry

and the strong, humble and faithful spirit that he brings to this important and challenging role.

"My confidence is not in my ability, skills or resources, but in Jesus Christ," Andy said. "I'm confident that Jesus Christ will provide all the resources and ability to do this mission."

During the service, Andy publicly affirmed his belief in Jesus Christ and confirmed that he was called to the ministry of Senior Pastor. The congregation was also asked to confirm their support and acceptance of Andy as their Senior Pastor, with many responding in loud applause and cheers.

The official act of commissioning took place as congregation elders and leaders gathered around Andy as the Rev Ken Day prayed.

As the service ended, Andy thanked the congregation for their support and encouragement.

"Some of you have inspired me, opened the Word of God to me, prayed for me," he said. "This is family. I thank you for all your love and support over the years. Please continue to pray for me and my family in the leadership of this congregation and I pray that we will all grow into the mission that we're called to as a community."

His predecessors, the Rev Dr Tony Chi and the Rev Dr Barry Chant, also prayed for Andy and his family.

In keeping with his passion for servant leadership, Andy ended his special day serving in the kitchen for Wesley Mission's annual Volunteers Appreciation Lunch which followed. ■

Care for children and adolescents from short overnight stays to one weekend monthly, several weeks and up to 12 months or more.

How much support can you offer?

To foster the future with Wesley Dalmar, call 1300 325 627

wesleymission.org.au





Compassion

Easter 2018

**Palm Sunday
at Circular Quay**

25 March – 1.30 pm procession

**Good Friday
at Martin Place**

30 March – 1.30 pm drama

**Easter Sunday
at Sydney Opera House**

1 April – 6 am sunrise service

Do all the good you can
because every life matters