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**HOPE**  
SYNOD 36



Report from

# Wesley Mission Queensland



Jude Emmer, WMQ Chief Executive Officer  
Paul Newman, WMQ Board Chair

## Context

### Who we are

Since 1907, Wesley Mission Queensland (WMQ) has been helping people across Queensland build stronger and more inclusive communities. We're an innovative and responsive not-for-profit community service provider that is called to offer community support, mental health services, respite and palliative care, aged care and retirement living. Supporting more than 100,000 people and their families in Queensland each year, as well as 3,500 members of the Deaf community across Australia through our National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service, we engage with people from all walks of life to encourage choice and independence. **Micah 6:8** reminds us that we are called to "**act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God.**" This calling has guided the work of our mission since its inception.

The purpose of WMQ is centred in the Christian doctrine of **Missio Dei: the Mission of God**. In other words, our very reason for existing as a non-for-profit faith-based service provider recognises that we are active participants, collaborators, servants and partners, responding to a divine call. The work we are called to has a divine purpose and is of cosmic proportions, the scope of which is well beyond our comprehension. And yet, for the part that we do play, we are also called to be faithful to the Christian traditions we have inherited through Albert Street Uniting Church, generous and creative in the way we imagine the future we are walking into, and courageous and agile in our missional engagement with the world. With all of this in mind, it is then helpful to acknowledge that whereas the context and content of our work may change, the people we work with and those we work for may differ, and our work practices and effectiveness will improve and evolve – **our purpose, the reason we do what we do, remains the same. To participate in the mission of God towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people.**

**There are many ways to work towards reconciliation.** But it nearly always begins with listening. We pray we will take the time to listen to one another – in particular, our First Nations People. And we pray we will learn to listen well.

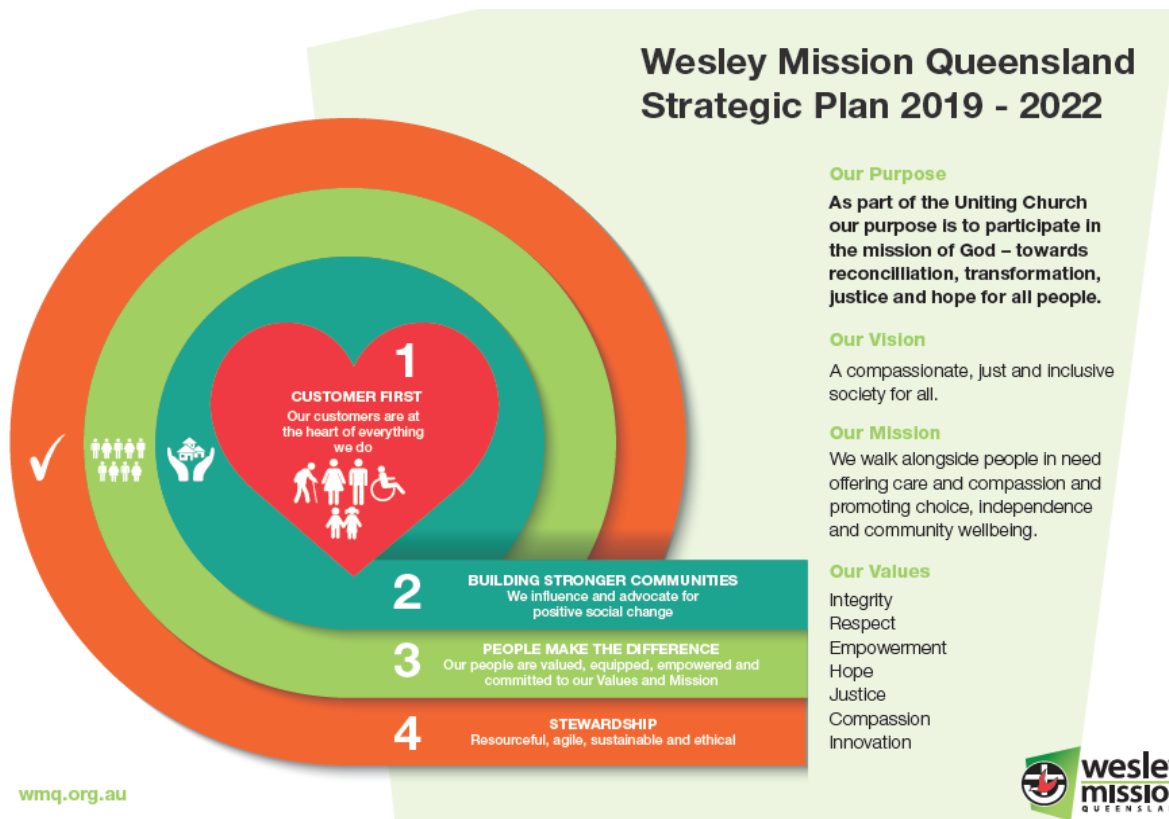
**There are many ways to work towards transformation in our communities.** But transformation nearly always begins with humility and recognising that things need to change. We pray we will give attention to the transformations that need to happen in our own lives as we work towards enabling transformation in the lives of others.

**There are many ways to work towards justice.** But it nearly always requires courage – courage to confront injustice, courage to advocate for those who have no voice. We pray that we will find the courage to overcome all forms of prejudice and inequality in our community.

**There are many ways to work towards hope.** But it nearly always requires conviction. A conviction that tomorrow does not need to have the same brokenness as today. That healing and wholeness can come that we are in this for the long haul.

The terminology of **reconciliation, transformation, justice, and hope** in our WMQ purpose statement arises from the gospel tradition that provides the foundation for [The Wesley Charter](#) – as does the inclusive mandate that *all people* will benefit from God's mission in the world. This is a big ask. And to be clear, well beyond our capacity to imagine, let alone achieve. We can't do everything. But we can trust that God's mission will also invite others to participate in ways that we cannot – and that their faithfulness will be able to achieve that which is beyond our resources and abilities.

And we can also commit to the undertaking that the things that we will do will be to the best of our ability as we continue to deliver on our four key strategic focus areas within our Strategic Plan.



- ***Our customers are at the heart of everything we do*** because the command of Christ is that we should love our neighbour – no matter who they are – and love is seen through concrete action. (Mark 12:31 Love your neighbour as yourself, there is no commandment great than these.)
- ***Our people are valued, equipped, empowered and committed to our values and mission*** because we can achieve together what we cannot do alone. (Heb 10:24 Let us consider how we may spur one another towards love and good deeds. Not giving up meeting together...)
- ***We influence and advocate for positive social change*** because the Christian gospel compels us to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God where there is good news for the poor, sight for the blind, and liberty for all who are oppressed. (Luke 4:18-19, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor... to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.)
- ***We are resourceful, agile, sustainable and ethical*** in our stewardship because the gifts and resources we have are for the benefit of others and not ourselves (1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.)

### Our focus over the past 18 months

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt all areas of life worldwide, WMQ remained focused on the safety and care of some of the most vulnerable in our society. The passion and commitment of our team have inspired us all. They have gone above and beyond to help protect WMQ residents and customers to provide some kind of 'normal' in what has been anything but normal circumstances. We see compassion and loyalty demonstrated at Wesley Mission Queensland across our services every day. That is not to say it has been an easy 18 months; in fact, it probably has been one of the most challenging times WMQ has faced. Working under ever-changing conditions and restrictions trying to protect our staff, customers, and residents from COVID-19 and the flow-on effects of workforce shortages and fatigue have been challenging for senior leadership and our employees. But when looking back at this time, the organisation has banded together, in the truest sense of the word 'team'. They have truly embraced this once in a lifetime challenge and used it as an opportunity to innovate.

The challenges from the pandemic were accompanied by a period of transformation for our organisation as we farewelled a stalwart of WMQ, CEO Geoff Batkin AM. Geoff led WMQ for 23 years, and under his leadership, the organisation expanded from its primary focus on residential aged care to delivering a wide range of services to those in need in our community.

With change comes opportunity, and in November 2020, WMQ welcomed Jude Emmer to the role of CEO. With a passion for providing outstanding care and outcomes and enhancing workplace culture, Jude is committed to Wesley Mission Queensland's mission and values and is driven by a strong sense of social justice and compassion. Jude embodies every quality the organisation stands for as she has led our staff through the past 15 months with grace and integrity.

Our approach of working together is better reflected in our new organisational structure endorsed by the WMQ Board and WMQ Council in June 2021, which has been refreshed under our OneWMQ project. Our goal through this project has been to build on the valued foundations at WMQ and enhance them through improved governance, data-backed decision making, a consistent 'customer first' approach, an engaged and productive workforce and effective stewardship of our resources. While this has required some changes for our people, our mission to deliver exceptional service and a seamless experience for the people we serve has remained the same.

In March 2021, the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety were released. What the Commission found was at times quite unsettling to read, but it was important that these issues were put in the spotlight. WMQ and the industry welcomed the federal government's response of an immediate one-off funding boost of \$17.7 billion to residential aged care in the May budget, centred around a five-year, five-pillar reform plan. The Government's response is the most extensive funding package since 2013. There is still much detail to be worked through, but the narrative of reform is encouraging. We are actively looking at our systems and models of care to ensure we continue to meet and exceed our care standards. We are following the progress of the Royal Commission closely into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and look forward to the recommendations that will inform positive changes for this marginalised and vulnerable group.

### Our Response to COVID-19

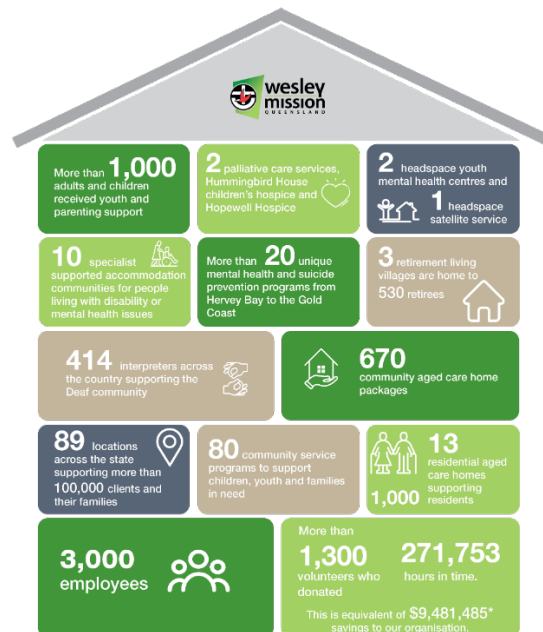
COVID-19 continued to present ongoing and new challenges to how Wesley Mission Queensland delivered its services and kept residents and clients connected with the families and loved ones. Our frontline staff did an incredible job in challenging circumstances, always keeping the care and safety of residents and clients as their priority. Continuing to work with increased PPE in a heightened risk

environment, they had a significant role in reducing the risk of COVID-19. We acknowledge the additional mental and physical load working under these conditions had on our staff and thank them wholeheartedly for their dedication and resilience. While many in the community were able to work from the relative safety of their own homes, our clinical and care, and support staff continued to go into their workplaces to help protect some of the most vulnerable to COVID-19. During times of lockdowns and frequent visitor restrictions when residents and clients were isolated from their families and friends, frontline staff took on even more responsibility for the wellbeing of those in their care and maintaining their social connections. Due to the vulnerable nature of our client groups and the instability caused by snap lockdowns and restrictions, we have supported our workforce that can work from home (WFH) and are currently implementing a formalised hybrid working arrangement for these staff.

At least two-thirds of our WFH workforce have embraced the new arrangements and flexibility it brings to their lives; however, we are mindful this does not work for everyone. Individual preferences and needs are taken into consideration alongside consultation with managers. It has been pleasing to note our productivity has not suffered from people working from home; on the contrary, our people have demonstrated their commitment and integrity.

The WMQ COVID-19 Response Team meet regularly to respond to new cases of community transmission and associated restrictions. One of our ongoing strengths has been to ensure clear and swift communications to our employees, clients, residents and families in a constantly changing environment. The need to communicate often has increased our engagement with both our workforce and customers. Over the past 18 months, there were hundreds of communications sent to staff, residents and families to keep them up-to-date with the ever-changing situation. The team kept up-to-date with health advice, regularly reviewed and updated COVID-19 response plans, ensured PPE stock levels were adequate, and performed risk assessments to ensure a safe environment and preparedness should an outbreak occur. WMQ will continue to plan and prepare for all COVID-19 related scenarios, keeping the safety and wellbeing of our clients, residents and staff as our main concern.

## 2020/21 Highlights



## Shared Life, Flourishing Communities

### Disciples of Jesus:

In 2021 Albert Street Uniting Church engaged in the process of appreciative inquiry to help develop its new strategic plan 2022-2025. This process included people from our worshipping community, political and community leaders, and friends and neighbours from the CBD. After a year of questioning, listening, collecting data, and theological reflection, the Albert Street Church has highlighted four Mission Focus Areas: attendance growth, Young People and Families with Young Children, Music Ministry and Mission Engagement in the CBD.

Albert Street Church has developed a thriving online ministry that includes live-streaming worship services, Baptisms, weddings and funerals, Zoom worship services, online prayer groups and life groups, providing access to recorded services, bible studies and other resources, and online church meetings for staff, leaders, congregation members. We now have active members of our church community who live in different states within Australia and internationally.

In 2022, Albert Street is developing three video-based Bible Study resources to be used with Life Groups or faith communities. These resources have been developed by the Ministry Team and include a six-week liturgy and preaching plan, a video resource to be used with Life Groups (either in-person or online) and a written Bible Study booklet.

**Invitation:** a six-week introduction to the Christian Faith.

**Oikos:** a six-week introduction to Albert Street Uniting Church.

**Followship:** a six-week guide to faithful Christian discipleship

The new strategic plan for Albert Street Uniting Church is very intentional about growing and strengthening our discipleship. We hope our **Followship** resource will be available to the wider church in time for Synod in Session in May.

Albert Street Uniting Church is also developing **Praxis Teams** to create opportunities for congregation members to provide spiritual and pastoral support alongside the service delivery of WMQ. Praxis Teams spend time in theological reflection, prayer and peer support and also receive specific training in relation to the mission and ministry areas where they are serving. The Praxis Team approach is encouraging the Albert Street congregation to see participation with WMQ service delivery as integral to Jesus' call to discipleship and the Mission of God.

YAAS (Young Adults at Albert Street) is a ministry area that has grown considerably over the last couple of years. Albert Street Uniting Church now has a committed group of young adults who regularly participate in social activities, Bible Study and theological reflection. YAAS meets in-person and online and offers opportunities for young adults to engage in meaningful conversations about faith and life and explore the Christian faith in their contemporary context.

### **WMQ Strategic Priority 1 Customer First – Our customers are at the heart of everything we do – Achievements over the past 18 months**

**Hummingbird House** – Queensland's only Children's Hospice made significant advancements in becoming a truly state-wide service, which will increase its ability to reach the estimated 5,700 Queensland families caring for a child with a life-limiting condition. In 2020, Hummingbird House's regional reach extended from northern New South Wales up to the Cape York Peninsula, spanning Kuranda, Ayr, Emerald, Townsville, Rockhampton, Ipswich and Nimbin. The service also saw a 28 per cent increase in the number of regional families it supports.

**Hummingbird House @ Home**, the community arm of this service, is currently piloting the delivery of NDIS services to families across the greater Brisbane area, covering Moreton Bay, Ipswich, Brisbane, and Logan. This will allow them to develop a best practice model for the delivery of paediatric palliative care services in a family's home or community, with a focus on clinical safety and quality of care. Once the pilot phase of this project is complete, the service will look to expand it to the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast before rolling it out across regional Queensland.

Hummingbird House also provides end of life care and after death care to families across the state, which is a rapidly growing part of the service. This increase has seen their Family and Community Support team almost triple capacity, as they provide ongoing grief and bereavement support to families for as long as they need it.

### Matthew's story

Matthew was one of the kindest boys I've ever met.... He basically lived for football." This is how Matthew's dad, Roland, remembers his funny, caring and determined son, whose love of soccer was a regular source of family banter. Matthew's parents, Emma and Roland, were connected with Hummingbird House soon after his diagnosis of a rare brain tumour, and it was there that they said their final goodbye to their son, who lit up a room with his wicked sense of humour.

Watch [Matthew's Story](#)



**The community meal offered through WMQ's Emergency Relief Hub** in Fortitude Valley continued to offer three meals a week across the entire year, including all lockdowns and was the only service that offered an official Christmas Day lunch in 2020. All community meal programs switched to COVID-safe takeaway and Wednesday night introduced a focus on healthcare and mental health clinics. Sourcing of food supply and food rescue became problematic as the supply chain broke down; staff responded by finding alternative suppliers, including WMQ kitchens, as well as partnering with local restaurants and cafes for food rescue. In 2020, COVID-safe dine-in began on Wednesday night for a limited number of people, with takeaway offered for a much larger group at the same time.

**Emergency Relief (ER)** in Fortitude Valley created COVID-safe interview spaces for clients with physical distancing and COVID sanitation and offered alternative interview processes at lockdown or Stage 2 restrictions that included phone-based, contactless interviews and video interviews via Facetime. ER offered home deliveries at the peak of Stage 1 restrictions. In addition, COVID-safe food packs were developed that included prepared snack packs. Over the 20/21 period, ER saw an increase in the supply of hampers from 4 per year per client to 10 per year and increased the size of the hamper. COVID sanitation packs were developed for clients and staff, including masks, hand sanitiser, wipes, moisturiser, and steriliser spray. ER operated throughout all lockdowns providing face-to-face contact and services.

**Stellar Arts** launched its new film and television workshop program, Stellar Cast. In this NDIS-funded workshop, participants are a part of the production team - learning the skills to write, direct, present, edit and aspects of lighting, sound and production design. This has meant some weeks are focused on generating content, learning how to improvise, building each voice and working collaboratively. Other weeks are more hands-on, experimenting with camera angles, effects and lighting. So far, the Stellar Cast team have completed two videos inspired by their interests. The first one focuses on the Broncos (including an interview with former player Petero Civoniceva) and, most recently, a cooking video about how to make apple pies. As they create more content and grow, this program will build into its subscription channel, which aims to create content for and by people living with a disability.



**Intergenerational connections with residential aged care (RAC) and local schools.** Over many years our RAC communities have developed meaningful connections with external community groups and schools. The joint program with Anam Cara Aged Care Community and Bray Park State School has been growing over the past six years. Relationship building and shared connection for both the students and residents have seen this program succeed and continue (when it could) during the pandemic. [RAC A beautiful friendship](#)

## **WMQ Strategic Priority 2 Building stronger communities – we influence for positive social change – Achievements over the past 18 months**

### **Specialist Disability Accommodation:**

**WesleyCare Maroochydore** opened its doors to nine new residents in September 2020, providing supported living for people with disabilities. Two different options are available at Maroochydore – one building contains four one-bedroom apartments while the other offers a shared living arrangement. Residents in their own apartments were invited to decorate and furnish their homes according to their taste and interests, allowing them to put their individual touches. The main building is a beautiful five-bedroom share home with large open spaces that all residents share for common activities and socialising. This new accommodation has provided independent living while still giving residents spaces to regularly join with family and friends and host special occasions such as Christmas and Easter celebrations. Residents and staff have also integrated well into the local community, making sure to support local businesses and hosting a sausage sizzle at Bunnings to raise money for recreational equipment.

**WesleyCare Asher Apartments** – provide five individual apartments for residents with high and complex care needs.

**WesleyCare Mt Gravatt and WesleyCare Cannon Hill** (in partnership with SDAA) – also opened and provide individualised specialist accommodation for eight residents, all with high and complex care needs.

**WMQ continued its advocacy work by joining with QCOSS** and 11 other organisations to lobby the Queensland government to commit to building 14,700 social homes across the state so that those in need have a safe place to call home. The campaign, called **The Town of Nowhere**, achieved landmark funding of \$2.9 billion.

WMQ also joined the **It's Time to Care About Aged Care** campaign calling on the Australian Government to commit to a major reform of the aged care system.

Jude Emmer took on the role of Chair of the **UnitingCare Australia Aged Care Network**, where she is contributing to the advocacy of UnitingCare Australia in aged care and any other areas that will enhance the dignity of older people. This includes contributing to the development of national positions and providing a community of practice through which the agencies that form the Aged Care Network can grow and develop their community services work and their contribution to the welfare of older people in Australia. With the reforms anticipated following the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, it is an exciting time to participate at a national level.

**WMQ continues to advocate for people with disability.** The majority of WMQ's advocacy undertaken for and with people with disabilities is in relation to the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme).

As the NDIS funding is 'individualised', we are supporting more and more families/people with disabilities to seek reviews of inadequate funding levels, particularly in relation to Supported Independent Living, as well as supporting families/primary support networks, to be in the best possible position to submit for funding – which is extremely cumbersome and technical. WMQ also focuses on advocacy via membership on national and state peak bodies representing service providers, disability industry groups and consumer bodies.

Recently WMQ has joined a **State Government Palliative Care Reference Group** as specialists in the provision of paediatric palliative care for children with disabilities, which was a significant gap in the development of policy in Queensland for these children and their families.

WMQ is also the lead agency for the Commonwealth government to engage with in relation to services to **Australia's Deaf Community**, as we are the only 'national' agency that engages over 400 Auslan Interpreters across Australia and provides Interpreting services to 6,000 Deaf Australians.

WMQ also led the engagement with the Queensland Department of Education to establish and fund a **Community Kindergarten program** at Toowong Childcare Centre, which is an Australian first and critical to Deaf children being socially and academically *on par* with their hearing peers when they commence Prep. This has now been transferred to Uniting Early Education and Learning.

**The cooperative.** After an official launch in mid-2021, Wesley Mission Queensland and Albert Street Uniting Church centre for public theology, the cooperative, launched its official program. This program includes:

- **A biennial public theology project** titled Uncommon Goods, including the inaugural conference to be held from September 2022. More than 25 papers from scholars across the globe have been accepted for the Uncommon Goods Conference, an event promising to be a highlight in Australian theology this year.
- **The Albert Street Lecture Series.** The Albert Street Uniting Lecture series will present quarterly lectures held and recorded from the Albert Street Church. These lectures will serve the Queensland community of the Uniting Church in Australia and allow space for public theological reflection as we think together about the past and future of the UCA and critical issues of our time. In future, lectures will be collated into a publication for distribution within the Synod.
- **Wesley Mission Queensland RAP partnership.** Hosting annual NAIDOC week panels and book clubs and exploring ways to make RAP conversations future quarterly events.
- **Digital Theology** on our website [thecooperativehub.com](http://thecooperativehub.com) which already contains dozens of articles and reflective theology
- **Inaugural cooperative fellows program** with 9 Australian theologians participating in the work of the cooperative over the next 12 months.
- **A public theology podcast – Big Little Issues** - that launched at the end of 2021 and is available whenever you get your podcasts.
- 2021 also ended with the wonderful news that the cooperative and the Director of the cooperative, Dr Janice McRandal, were announced as part of the 2021-2023 grant winning research project Figuring the Enemy: Socio-Cognitive and Political Theological Approaches to the Question of Enmity. The grant was awarded by The University of Divinity and will bring

some exciting theological conversations to the Australian Christian and theological community.

We are thrilled with the beginnings of the project in public theology and look forward to the surprising ways it will grow and expand into the future.

## Transforming our Community:

### WMQ Mental Health Services

**WMQ Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Services** continue to experience steady growth (85% revenue growth over the past 18 months on top of significant growth since 2017) and remain well-positioned to continue to attract some of the record investment/spending expected by both state and federal governments over the coming years, to meet rising rates of mental ill health and distress in our communities.

WMQ currently deliver 17 unique mental health and suicide prevention programs across SE QLD and Wide Bay - each year supporting approximately 10,000 children, young people and adults, delivering over 57,000 occasions of service.

We work within a mental health system in critical need of structural reform and struggling to meet the rising demands of people in distress. Our focus for growth remains on child and youth mental health (via the Wesley Kids brand) and suicide prevention.

**Child and Youth Mental Health**, in Australia, half of all adult mental health challenges emerge before the age of 14, and more than 50% of children experiencing mental health challenges are not receiving professional help. In response, WMQ launched the **Wesley Kids** brand in 2020, which provides best practice child-focussed child and family mental health support for children under 12.

About [Wesley Kids](#)

WMQ is also the lead agency for three **headspace** centres in Capalaba, Hervey Bay and Maryborough for young people aged 12-25. These centres are all at capacity and struggle to meet the increasing complexity young people are presenting with – COVID has exacerbated mental health difficulties for young people and their caregivers.

**Suicide Prevention**, WMQ currently operates the two busiest '**Way Back Support Services**' in Australia (Gold Coast and Brisbane South). These teams support people for up to 12 weeks following a suicide attempt.

WMQ has worked closely with both state and federal government to deliver innovative and comprehensive responses to people across the spectrum of suicidality. This includes:

- Early intervention support for people in distress but not yet suicidal (referred by GPs and community organisations on the Gold Coast)
- Mens mentoring program including across regional QLD (**Marcus Mission**)
- Coordination of a '**Safe Space Network**' for community alternatives to emergency department for people in distress (Brisbane North)
- Dedicated suicide prevention officer in schools (role in response to high youth suicide rates in the Fraser Coast)

- Psychological intervention program for people who have attempted or are at risk of suicide or self-harm (Brisbane South)
- State-wide pilot of a carer support program (**Crossing Paths**, Gold Coast)
- Aftercare support via the Way Back Support Services (Gold Coast, Brisbane South)

We remain particularly concerned about the decreasing age for young people presenting with suicidal thoughts (as young as five years old) and the lack of appropriate evidence base, services available and support for staff working with such complexity.

**Logan Foyer Project** received international accreditation via the FOYER Foundation for the success of this program (90%+) in supporting and linking 18–25-year-olds, who have come from traumatic backgrounds to achieve success to live independently, address a myriad of personal/social issues unique to them, as well as, successfully go on to ‘learn’ or ‘earn’.

**Staff Wellbeing – Mental Health First Aid Network**, in addition to the extensive staff wellbeing program in place, WMQ also continue to grow our staff volunteer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) network. Interest and participation in the network continue to grow, with 140 MHFA Officers trained across all WMQ directorates and represented in 60 services and locations delivering over 700 interventions across the past two years.

This program was recognised with a Gold Award from Mental Health First Aid Australia and a finalist nomination for the QLD Mental Health Week achievement awards in 2021.

**Mental Health Practice Framework – Striving for organisational excellence**, WMQ continues to actively implement our organisational Mental Health Practice Framework developed in 2019 – this is an overarching framework for how WMQ delivers all services in a way that support positive mental wellbeing and has the following objectives:

- Define the consistency and quality in how we respond to the mental health needs of all who interact with WMQ services and programs
- Promote leadership of effective mental health-related practice across work areas
- Support professional reflection and development to improve mental health-related practice
- Guide the development and design of programs and services that better respond to the mental health needs of individuals, whether that be recovering from a mental health concern or promoting optimal wellbeing and resilience
- Foster a culture that enables WMQ to be a leader in mental health practice in the health, social and community services sectors into the future.

### **Covenanting with First Peoples**

2020/2021 was a year of challenges that profoundly impacted how we work and live. Those already facing social and economic disadvantages left us more committed than ever to creating a workplace and world where we all feel a sense of belonging. The legacy of this historical and cultural context is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain inadequately represented in key governance structures across all levels of society – with decisions being made for and not by them. Although improvements have been made, cultural safety has not been consistently integrated into employment practices or standards of healthcare and community services. This is equally true at WMQ. A 2021 milestone was the appointment of a First Nations leader to lead Reconciliation and Diversity & Inclusion, working in partnership with the community as we continue to take historic steps forward and ensure we engage fully and transparently.

**The Innovate Wesley Mission Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan** demonstrates our collective efforts to ensure equality, equity, recognition and advancement of First Nations People across all aspects of society and in everyday life. WMQ leads through actions, policies and practices that strengthen and support reconciliation both organisational and beyond, and we are committed to reframing the relationship with First Nations Peoples.

**Positive change is occurring from our employment and procurement practices** to policy development and program delivery. We are committed to improving the career development of First Nations People within WMQ, including the provision of training and employment opportunities. Our workforce includes a minimal number of staff who identify as First Nations People (19 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, an increase of 8 people from 30 June 2019). Although a small number, it is an intentional trend towards closing the gap in employment outcomes for First Nations People at WMQ. WMQ is a place of care and a workplace that embodies our mission of compassion, justice and inclusivity; we wish to become industry leaders in the employment and care of First Nations People; strengthen relationships with the local community; and embed self-determination into all that we do. In the coming season, we will be implementing the WMQ First Nations Recruitment and Retention Strategy to ensure WMQ are intentional in offering employment opportunities to our First Nations brothers and sisters.

Participants of the **ORCA Project** – a workforce support program for school leavers with different abilities – created a Welcome to Country video as part of Reconciliation Action Week.

[ORCA Acknowledgement of Country](#)

**In 2020-2021 WMQ spent more than \$120,000 in WMQ procurement through the WMQ First Nations Procurement Policy**, tripling spending from the previous year.

The second half of this period has seen a strong focus in improving connections with our First Nations employees and further engaging our workforce with our reconciliation activities.

**Quarterly Yarning Circles** are held with the Executive Leadership Team and First Nations employees. Not only to improve WMQ's social license, the Yarning Circle is about learning from a collective group, building respectful relationships and preserving and pass on knowledge. These narratives reflect First Nations Peoples' experience, affirm identity and provide a safe space to share the significant meanings of life and culture. Through sharing and interweaving our understandings, we may see a way to grow healing spaces with individuals and find healing pathways for groups and communities.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

WMQ recognises and values the cultural diversity of its workforce. This gives practical expression to our Christian social teaching principles and our belief in the inherent dignity of the human person and the mission towards **reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people**.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Committee has been reinvigorated under the leadership of the new Manager, Reconciliation and Diversity and Inclusion. The team are working cross-functionally across our services and looking to implement tangible actions to better support our diverse workforce and clients.

## Fit for Purpose and wise stewards

### WMQ Strategic Priority 3 People make the difference – Our people are valued, equipped, empowered, and committed to our values and mission – Achievements over the past 18 months

From early in 2021, the Executive Leadership Team undertook substantial investment in ensuring our organisation is fit-for-purpose and best placed to execute our Strategic Plan. This led to the development of the **'One WMQ' project** to ensure collaboration and effective communication across the organisation. The overarching belief is that we should always align our structures, thinking, and approach to any work or project with 'One WMQ' in mind. Anecdotal and formal feedback has overwhelmingly indicated that this change management work was cost-effective, well-managed and has provided greater clarity internally and externally on "who does what". More importantly, we have seen an increase in cross-functional collaboration. Our focus on a business-partnering model between frontline portfolios and corporate support staff has been a highlight as this work continues to evolve. WMQ has drawn on the Biblical imagery of 1 Corinthians 12 – ***we are one body with many parts*** – called to participate in God's mission in the world.

**One of the most significant changes for WMQ under the OneWMQ project was the development of the Governance, Performance and Outcomes (GPO) Directorate.** The Governance, Performance and Outcomes directorate was established to best support WMQ's service growth now and into the future with the following focus areas under its remit:

- **Care and clinical practice excellence** – A comprehensive Care and Clinical Excellence Program will be established to enhance organisational performance and quality customer care.
- **Best practice risk management** – A fully automated Risk Profile for all services and programs enables us to manage and mitigate risks across governance, operational and clinical risk indicators.
- **Develop new and continually review existing policies, procedures and processes** to ensure Best Practice, operational effectiveness in practice and operational efficiency in resources.
- **Social impact and Outcome measurements** will be established for the effective measurement of our large programs to assist in our organisational decisions and to optimise funding sources and evidence 'making a difference'.
- **Enhance the WHS program** to generate time and cost savings related to worker injury and absenteeism.
- **Assurance program** tailored to address key organisational and program/service risks to support continuous improvement.
- **Research and Innovation Hub** - We will develop partnerships with universities and participate in **Research** to improve the health and wellbeing of our customers and help solve our most complex problems. **Innovation** helps to drive our Mission and is critical to help achieve financial sustainability. There is a high correlation between innovation with both competitive positioning and financial performance.

Over the past 18 months, a number of initiatives were developed and/or implemented in response to the late 2019 **MyVOICE employee engagement survey**. These included: a new length of service recognition program reward; access for all staff to Office 365 as a tool for better communication and collaboration platforms; a new learning management system implemented with access to more than 70,000 online training modules; and a trial of new iPad technology.

The MyVOICE employee engagement survey was again undertaken in October 2020 with extremely pleasing results.

- Increased response rate from the 2019 survey from 51% to 78% in 2021. Engagement and communication sharing the message of the importance of the employee survey assisted in the increase in Responses.
- Increased eNPS score from +21 in 2019 to +48 in 2021.
- Pleasingly, the highest-ranked question with an average score of 84.7% indicated WMQ employees understand how they contribute to the purpose of the organisation. This strength is also a focus for further actions to build on this organisational strength.

In November 2020, we celebrated “**what we are grateful for**” with individual painted rocks by our employees, residents and clients constructed into a Gratitude Wall at the Wheller Gardens, Chermside campus. A time capsule was buried with messages from residents and staff sharing reflections on the global pandemic. The wall was unveiled with an official Service of Gratitude led by the Rev Dr Peter Hobson. This wall will be a long-lasting reminder of the resilience of WMQ staff and how they pulled together to meet the challenges of COVID-19.



*WMQ Wall of Gratitude*

**In June 2021, WMQ launched the Emerging Leader program** with content based on activities to explore self-assessment and how to use timeless principles of creating cohesive teams that will enable us to deliver on our strategic goals. Workshops were rolled out for our middle management leaders, the Senior Leadership Team and departmental teams to explore personality preferences in the form of communication, conflict and problem solving. This is a blended learning program consisting of face-to-face workshops, online learning, work-shadowing and a formal mentoring program. The learning is aligned with our leadership development framework and brings together the principles of leading self, others and the organisation.

**In November 2021, WMQ launched the WMQ Mentoring program.** This formal mentoring program forms part of our leadership development strategy and is a program aimed to effectively and efficiently increase gains achieved through leadership development initiatives. Mentoring supports individual development whilst building a strong, supportive relationship that increases collaboration within and across the organisation. The mentoring program uses an external facilitator providing training to both mentors and mentees for everyone to feel comfortable not only with their role and expectations but also with the program's structure. The program is managed by our Manager-Organisational Development to ensure alignment with our expected outcomes and return on investment.

**Wesley Mission Queensland's volunteers** worked under COVID-19 restrictions to support those in need within the community - many in frontline and supporting positions; some are helping in community events; others in a virtual capacity are mentoring, educating, befriending, or visiting our residents, clients and customers online. We also had an influx of community groups offering to give us assistance over the short term where we needed it most. We currently have:

- 76 volunteer programs across all our services
- 1303 rostered volunteers currently active
- 1466 people have registered to be part of our events and projects volunteer pool to help ad hoc when required.

**In June 2021, WMQ held its Charter Day,** a whole-of-organisation team-building initiative, in a way that was radically different from anything we had done before. COVID-19 restrictions forced us to innovate, and so we were pleased to be able to run Charter Day 2021 from a TV studio in Woolloongabba. We had a record number of participants at live sites at Kedron and Robina and our online audience live streaming from our services and the homes of those working from home. Our Charter Day feedback was excellent, with high levels of engagement and a renewed passion for those we serve. An essential part of Charter Day 2021 was our annual Charter Awards, which saw a record number of nominations and the presentation of awards to the highest possible calibre of nominees.



*WMQ Charter Day 2021*



## WMQ Strategic Priority 4 Stewardship – Resourceful, agile, sustainable and ethical – Achievements over the past 18 months

**The WMQ Board Governance Committee** was established in September 2021. The newly formed committee of the WMQ Board supports and advises the WMQ Board in relation to WMQ’s corporate governance responsibilities and practices. There are now three committees of the WMQ Board, the WMQ Care and Clinical Governance Committee and the Audit Finance and Risk Committee, with each having specific oversight responsibilities.

**WMQ repositioned our specialist disability accommodation (SDA) growth strategy** away from developing SDAs, which require capital expenditure, to partnering with others to offer service delivery only. Given WMQ’s reputation as a leader in the provision of SDA and Supported Independent Living services (SIL) and the interest from other organisations in partnering with us as a service provider, this makes good commercial sense. In 2020/21, we have partnered with SDA Australia Housing to develop an SDA at Mt Gravatt – 4 x 2-bedroom apartments and continue to explore additional opportunities and partnerships. These partnerships will add to our suite of specialist disability services which is a growth focus area for WMQ over the next season.

**Wesley Industries strengthened its business relationship with NAK hair products**, which increased the amount of work NAK outsources to Wesley Industries. Also gained NAK support of Hummingbird House both financially and as a supplier of welcome packs for Hummingbird House families.

**Fundraising** responded to the difficulties of COVID-19 with innovative thinking, changing the format of the Cycle for Mental Health to a virtual challenge and hosting WMQ’s first Giving Day. Giving Day raised more than \$180,000 for our Emergency Relief Hub through donations that were matched by corporate and philanthropic sponsors. One hundred and one volunteers helped raise more than \$33,000 at Westfield Chermside’s Christmas gift wrapping stall for our Emergency Relief Hub, our best result to date. More than 20 volunteers returned for a third year to help wrap more than 6000 gifts. Hummingbird House partnered with Coles stores across Queensland once again and raised \$580,000 for the service. The fundraising and grants teams both exceeded their financial targets in a competitive philanthropic environment.

In 2021 WMQ undertook a **Strategic Asset Review**, which provided a current view of our physical built assets. The review provided WMQ with a summary of the existing status, the key issues facing us, our drivers and challenges and opportunities combined with some appropriate solutions. The Executive Leadership Team and the WMQ Board will consider this review during 2022 Strategic Planning days.

**Environmental Stewardship** is embedded in the foundations of the Uniting Church in Australia and has a strong alignment to WMQ’s mission and Strategic Plan. Furthermore, within the health and aged care sectors, the expectations on corporate environmental sustainability are increasing, and as transparency becomes more prevalent, organisations recognise the need to act. This highlights an opportunity to strengthen our strategy, mission and market alignment by establishing a coordinated environmental sustainability program within WMQ’s operations.

As such, WMQ is looking to formalise its Environmental Sustainability strategy, targets and goals. WMQ is working with expert partners from within the Uniting Church network on developing these along with key pillars of focus that will maximise our opportunity to reduce our environmental impact. Over the past 18 months, we have taken small steps to reduce our impact on the environment by activities such as installing solar power at our large production kitchen and one of our large Residential Aged

Care (RAC) homes, as well as a light replacement program moving to LED lighting at many of our sites. Once the Environmental sustainability strategy is finalised and endorsed, we will see a significant uplift in our environmental sustainability activities.

Over the past 12 months, **Digital, Data and Information Security** has been a significant focus to inform data-driven decision making. WMQ has increased its technology offering and introduced telehealth, a remote workforce, innovation to service delivery models and robotic process automation. Digitalisation is at the heart of what we do now, and we will continually evolve this. We have commenced leading with a digital-first and a data-driven mindset in all that we do to ensure we remain competitive and sustainable. We have good digital partnerships and the ability to leverage those to enable and advance our organisation in an agile way. Our wisdom is derived from data, analytics and the predictive analysis of the issues our customers are facing or could face and proactively being ahead of these rather than waiting for these to happen and then responding. The ever-changing landscape of cyber and the continuous risk it poses is a constant focus for WMQ. Much like COVID, it isn't going away. Understanding what it takes to keep our information safe will remain a key focus.

## Doing Life Together – collaboration across the life of the church

### Project Plenty participation

Representatives from WMQ continue to participate in the various Project Plenty working groups. As we are called ***to participate in the mission of God towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people***, collaboration, partnering and sharing in these spaces is providing opportunities for us all to make a positive difference to the people we serve.

WMQ has active membership in the following working groups, which also support WMQ strategic objectives:

- Environment and Sustainability
- Covenant with First Peoples
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Mission Partnerships
- Governance Reform
- Plentiful Leadership

### WMQ Chaplaincy

The WMQ Pastoral and Spiritual Care (PSC) Team continues to grow and evolve. Over the last 18 months, the PSC Team has learned to minister to residents, clients, staff and families during a global pandemic where mandated lockdowns and restrictions have often resulted in increased fear, stress, confusion and isolation. WMQ has provided wonderful care and support to some of the most vulnerable people in our community, and the PSC Team has been an integral part of this.

The makeup of our team is changing as new positions are created, and new ministry practice is being developed. The core approach to our pastoral care continues to be shaped by the ***Missio Dei*** and [The Eden Alternative](#). Our chaplains record online worship services, use iPads to connect video calls with loved ones in isolation and have become experts in donning and doffing PPE. We are expanding our PSC Team to include a Palliative Care Chaplain (providing specialised care to Hummingbird House and

Hopewell Hospice) and a Chaplain Educator (for staff and volunteers). We hope to provide pastoral care and spiritual support in WMQ Community Services in the future.

### Collaboration WMQ, Albert Street Uniting Church, Zillmere Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and Kedron Chermside Uniting Church

Wesley Mission Queensland is intentional in further developing and growing our relationship with the Zillmere Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

We have been working closely with the Zillmere congregation to support their dreams and goals to provide much needed appropriate, safe, fit- for purpose spaces to serve their community. Zillmere's dream is to create greater cultural, social and wellbeing opportunities in the local community, ensuring self-determination for First Nations People. WMQ's goal is to support Zillmere's self-determination and achieve their goals.

A group made up of members from Zillmere UAICC, WMQ, Albert Street UC, Kedron Chermside UC, and the Moreton Rivers Presbytery are walking together in building stronger relationships to further shared outcomes for their congregations. As these relationships grow, the group expect to experience further collaboration and the bringing together of these three congregations in partnership opportunities.

## Threats and opportunities as we step into the future together

### Challenges

**Workforce** is the single most significant challenge for WMQ and other aged care and community services organisations. WMQ is embarking upon significant organisational transformation aimed at better positioning the organisation to continue to deliver high-quality aged care, disability care and community services for Queensland. This will become more critical as the future state of the sector in Queensland is projected to demand the employment of 20,000 more health workers by 2025<sup>1</sup>.

How WMQ plans, develops, engages and supports its team members to meet the new challenges and expectations of the transformation will be critical to its success. Our people are critical for our sustained success, and it is essential that we attract, develop and retain our team members to ensure our workforce delivers excellence and is strongly positioned for future challenges.

**The COVID-19 Pandemic** has proven our new normal is forever evolving. WMQ has demonstrated its flexibility and responsiveness to the impact and challenges of the global pandemic over the past two years. The way we deliver some of our services has had to change; although these changes have come with many challenges, they have also provided opportunities to diversify and increase geographical reach through further introduction of technology-driven services. In the coming months and years, as we journey together through whatever the pandemic brings next, we reflect on ***A Season for Everything, Everything Has Its Time***, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. It is more evident now than ever before the

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Access Economics (2016). Forecasting the future: Community Services in Queensland 2025.

need to ensure we inspire and instil *hope* for the customers we serve and our workforce who diligently care for our most vulnerable.

### Opportunities and the future

#### Rosemount Retirement Living Stage 2

WMQ is in the process of finalising a construction build start date for the Rosemount Stage 2 Retirement Community at Sinnamon Park.

The completion of the second stage of the Rosemount Retirement Community at Sinnamon Park has been included in WMQ's forward planning since 2015. The WMQ Strategic Plan supports the intention to continue to enhance integrated communities, providing a range of services to elders, including residential aged care, retirement living options and community care support.

Rosemount Stage 1, consisting of 70 retirement living apartments completed in May 2019, has become a close-knit community of residents who experience the absolute best lifestyle of independence, with security and connection. Rosemount offers a design that promotes security and peace of mind within a supported community. The Rosemount community supports retirement living residents to:

- social connection and counter social isolation
- foster a strong sense of belonging and community
- remove the burden of house and garden maintenance
- provide peace of mind that comes with the ability to age-in-place amongst like-minded friends
- provide a safe and secure environment to call home



*Rosemount Retirement Community*

The attraction of co-located retirement living and residential aged care is well documented and understood within the industry. Rosemount Stage 2 will see an additional 50 apartments added to the Rosemount and Sinnamon Village community.

The Rosemount Retirement Community offers resort-style amenities including a BBQ pavilion, café, library, gym, heated swimming pool (completed as part of Stage 1), cinema and community garden are all to be completed as part of Stage 2. The Residents' Committee, Gardening Group and Social Committee have all been formed by the current resident body and meet on a regular basis. Rosemount Café has been operating since the village opened.

When completed, the Rosemount Retirement Living development will provide a total of 120 apartments, which we also believe is an appropriate number and of sufficient scale to generate the community connectedness for a successful retirement village.

### **City Hub strategy**

The City Hub, or 'an integrated support network Brisbane City and beyond', is still in its early ideas/strategy phase. With our mission at the heart of our vision for the service, we aim to grow our existing services and build a strong presence for WMQ and Albert Street Church to work together to walk alongside people in need, offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community wellbeing. Key components include 1. a radically inclusive space/place – the Warm Hug; 2. meeting basic needs; 3. building relationships and connecting; 4. servicing the gaps; and 5. building communities. This will include 'place based' and outreach models, bringing our current services (aged care, allied health, mental health, homeless services, disability support, youth and family supports, crisis relief, arts, access and inclusion services) to the city area and seeking funding and partnership to service people in need.

### **Social / Affordable Housing options**

Our vision is that the people we serve have access to a safe, secure and affordable home. Homes that meet their needs enable participation in their social and economic life to live with meaning. WMQ will participate in transforming the way housing assistance is delivered, increasing the supply of social and affordable homes, supporting construction industry jobs and partnering with government and sometimes other service providers to reduce homelessness in Southeast Queensland.

### **Conclusion**

WMQ looks forward to the next 'season' with *a daring hope* and anticipation. We hold onto the words of 1 Peter 5:10 '*And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.*'

In the coming years, WMQ will continue to seek opportunities to further live out our purpose as *we walk alongside people in need, offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community wellbeing.*

## Proposals to the 36th Synod

It is proposed that the 36<sup>th</sup> Synod receive this report.

### Contact for report questions

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