



Report from

# Wesley Mission Queensland



# Report

We acknowledge as a church that the resources with which God has entrusted us are a gift to be used for mission and ministry in our community. We are small, but we are big—the people of Wesley Mission Queensland seek to have a very big heart. As part of the Uniting Church we are people who love God and want to make a difference; we are congregations—God's people gathering in worship, witness and service; we offer service programs supporting thousands of people in need at all ages and stages of life; we are thousands of staff and volunteers from all different backgrounds, faith and cultures united in the mission of God—towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people.

As the Uniting Church we are one and we are many, seeking to express God's love for the world.

The Albert Street Congregation is the birthplace and spiritual home of Wesley Mission Queensland (WMQ). Since its first acts of compassion and kindness in the late 1800s, this thriving faith community has had a vital presence in the Brisbane central business district (CBD). Worship, witness and service have been core to the mission and ministry of Albert Street since the formation of the Central Methodist Mission (now known as Wesley Mission Queensland) in 1907. It started with the employment of three community nurses in 1907 reaching out to homeless people in the streets of Brisbane and later became the first age care community in Queensland at Wheller Gardens in 1936. While there has been further developments and expansion of the mission and service activities of WMQ, over many years the worshipping community of the Albert Street Uniting Church remains the spiritual home of WMQ.

With restrictions in place relating to public worship, the weekly Albert Street Uniting Church services quickly moved to an online platform. From 22 March 2020 through to 5 July 2020 we averaged over 330 online devices participating each week. From 12 July 2020 Albert Street Uniting Church returned to public worship each Sunday morning at 9am, with the service recorded and uploaded to YouTube during the week for those who were unable to attend in person. The new online community continues to average over 100 devices participating each week with people from Victoria, Western Australia, North Queensland and overseas joining us for worship. Some people are gathering in lounge rooms to worship and share fellowship together, while others are self-isolating and are using this opportunity to experience an online worshipping community. It has been a steep learning curve for us all, and we are learning new skills and strategies to bring good news to the world through the internet.

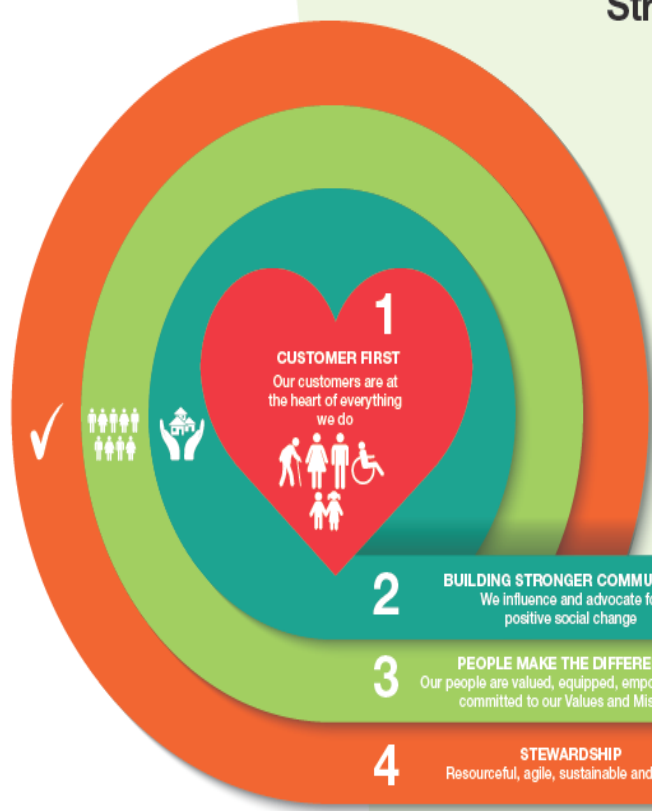
## Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Since the 34<sup>th</sup> Synod as we celebrated the theme of “sow”, none of us could ever have imagined the world we now currently live and breathe. A world of much change, uncertainty, sadness, despair and anxiety. Yet we have hope ... “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

## Our heart: Strategic priorities 2019–2022

### Wesley Mission Queensland Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022



**Our Purpose**  
As part of the Uniting Church our purpose is to participate in the mission of God – towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people.

**Our Vision**  
A compassionate, just and inclusive society for all.

**Our Mission**  
We walk alongside people in need offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community wellbeing.

**Our Values**  
Integrity  
Respect  
Empowerment  
Hope  
Justice  
Compassion  
Innovation


**1 CUSTOMER FIRST**  
Our customers are at the heart of everything we do

**2 BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES**  
We influence and advocate for positive social change

**3 PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**  
Our people are valued, equipped, empowered and committed to our Values and Mission

**4 STEWARDSHIP**  
Resourceful, agile, sustainable and ethical

[wmq.org.au](http://wmq.org.au)



## Wesley Mission Queensland Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022

### Key focus areas

#### 1 CUSTOMER FIRST



*Our customers are at the heart of everything we do*

- 1.1 Our customers are seen, heard, valued and empowered to be active partners in the services we provide.
- 1.2 Our customers know about us, understand why they choose us and why they want to stay with us.
- 1.3 We focus on the whole person – body mind and spirit – within the family and community context.
- 1.4 We respond to emerging community needs as we grow our core services and implement innovative pilot programs.

#### 3 PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



*Our people are valued, equipped, empowered and committed to our Values and Mission*

- 3.1 Our workforce is well trained, capable, committed and motivated to embrace the Wesley Charter and deliver customer service excellence.
- 3.2 We provide a safe, inclusive and supportive workplace culture
- 3.3 Our people are valued, by ensuring our wages, employee benefits and working conditions are competitive, relative to the sectors in which we work.

#### 2 BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES



*We influence and advocate for positive social change*

- 2.1 Our communities are welcoming and inclusive, providing opportunities to celebrate life in all its fullness.
- 2.2 Wesley Mission Queensland respectfully journeys with Australia's First Peoples.
- 2.3 We are influencers of positive social change and reform grounded in the experience of our customers, services and ethical framework.

#### 4 STEWARDSHIP



*Resourceful, agile, sustainable and ethical*

- 4.1 We are financially and environmentally sustainable.
- 4.2 Wesley Mission Queensland is responsive and agile in a changing and competitive market.
- 4.3 Our key supporters and stakeholders are active contributors to our mission and to the people we serve.
- 4.4 We implement progressive governance practices to enhance customer service and proactively embrace and manage opportunities and risks.
- 4.5 Our customer experience is enhanced through our investment in research, innovation and new technologies.

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Over the past 18 months we have continued to focus on delivering our strategic priorities, ensuring our “customer is at the heart of everything we do”, as we “build stronger communities” with our “people making a difference”, seeking to be “good stewards of the resources entrusted to us for mission”.

However, even though the impact of COVID-19 in 2020 has slowed some of the newest initiatives that we had planned for 2020, we have maintained the extensive range of programs and support services that touch the lives of more than 100,000 people each year.

### About Wesley Mission Queensland

The aged care and community services sectors are living through one of the most profound periods of change in recent decades. With the challenges of two Royal Commissions (aged care and disability); increasing expectations of service users; increased government regulation and oversight;

increased public scrutiny including in some sectors a loss of public trust; and a global pandemic there are significant pressures on boards, senior leadership, leaders and staff throughout the organisation.

The interim report from the Aged Care Royal Commission is a call to the aged care sector, the Australian community and particularly the Australian Government to lead a process of conversation and renewal including adequate funding to provide access to quality care and support services. WMQ is committed to contribute and actively participate in the process of reform following the recommendations from the Aged Care Royal Commission due in February 2021.

The UnitingCare Australia vision: **“Imagine an Australian community where older people are valued and included in community life, enabled to maintain health and independence, are able to contribute their talents and wisdom, pursue their interests, nurture relationships, maintain their culture and spirituality, and be in control of their future”.**

WMQ are working with UnitingCare Australia and the UnitingCare agencies across Australia to be active participants in the change process and to strongly advocate for access to quality services for the people we serve and the funding that is required. Approximately 60 per cent of aged care homes in Australia are currently operating at a loss. Some aged care providers are choosing to exit the sector. More than 100,000 elderly Australians are waiting for long periods to access a home care package for which they have an assessed need—sometimes up to two years—the tragedy is that some people have passed away whilst waiting for this home care package.

There are hopes across Australia for improved access to a wide range of ‘promised’ support services for people living with a disability—some of these services and housing will take years to deliver. WMQ are seeking to further grow our specialist disability accommodation as a primary focus over the next few years.

In this context we require disciplined governance and leadership to innovate, grow and respond to changing needs, the environment and manage risk. Collectively we have a wealth of experience, creativity and passionate staff and volunteers, as well as one of the widest service networks in Australia.

## **COVID-19**

The threat of COVID-19 has created an opportunity for our people to shine and to celebrate life in the midst of the great uncertainty that a global pandemic brings. Since February 2020 our energy and focus has been on adapting and building new ways of supporting people in need whilst having an intense focus on doing all we can to keep our people safe from COVID-19. This has not been easy; this has and remains a significant challenge for us all.

Most importantly for residents, family members and friends of residents there has been a sense of grief and loss when government legislation has required us to restrict access for visits from family and friends of residents in care (except in special circumstances such as end of life care). It has been tragic for some residents and families to not be able to visit in person, comfort, share stories with and touch their loved ones as they had been doing for months or years before COVID-19. For many

families this has been exacerbated by not being able to celebrate the life of a loved one who has died in the ways that we have taken for granted prior to COVID-19. This has brought great sadness and despair for some people, even though there has been a recognition from families that keeping COVID-19 out of our aged care homes is of the highest priority.

During this time, we have seen our staff live with compassion, innovation and flexibility in response to the pandemic. We are extremely proud of our people and teams that have shown resilience and commitment to those in their care, as we have responded to multiple State and Federal requirements that have impacted: working arrangements; visitor restrictions; infection control requirements; supporting families who can't see their loved one as often as they would like and many more. The additional workload and anxiety operating in this environment cannot be underestimated.

Technology has played a significant role in supporting our connectedness to our residents and their families and staff—people have learnt new systems, connected with friends and families overseas, enjoyed live streaming concerts and entertainment, and more recently enjoyed and were fascinated by our new 'robot' residents! Virtual activities and entertainment have been received well and our residents have expressed their gratitude to us for “keeping them safe” with restricted visitors. In spite of all these wonderful initiatives COVID-19 has and continues to create uncertainty, loss and great challenge to residents, families and loved ones, as well as our staff and volunteers—as we all do our best to adapt to a COVID-19 environment.

Many of our staff roles that are appropriate to work from home were mobilised and at times during June to September 2020, we have had approximately 60 per cent of this workforce successfully and productively working from home. In many ways the impetus of COVID-19 on our Information Technology and Communications platform has brought forward our horizons for change by more than three years.

We are now getting acquainted with the continued “scale up and scale down” of COVID-19 restrictions as we plan and respond to this challenge which we expect is likely to continue for many more months to come.

We encourage Synod members to view our videos available on the WMQ Trade Display space on the Synod portal, that tell our story of mission throughout our programs and services—we hope you will enjoy.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

## Organisational snapshot

As part of the Uniting Church, we seek to live out our purpose to participate in the mission of God towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people.

We operate from more than 70 program locations in Queensland with services that touch the lives of more than 100,000 people each year. We celebrate the diversity and richness of the experience of our staff team who come from 60 different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Our annual operating revenue is more than \$250M with over 3000 staff and more than 3000 volunteers.

### What we do:

- Albert Street Uniting Church including Art from the Margins, English Corner, Community Meal and “the cooperative”
- Residential aged care
- In home aged care services and support
- Community aged care services
- Retirement living
- A wide range of disability services
- Specialist disability housing and support
- Mental health services
- Health and well-being services
- Child care, youth and family services
- Food, housing and emergency support
- Supported youth housing
- Palliative and end-of-life care for children and adults
- National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service for the deaf community





## Focus since the last Synod

### Addressing the need for specialist disability accommodation:

We continue the journey to support one of our most vulnerable groups of people in our community. People living with disability deserve to live a life of “choice and freedom”. WMQ has a targeted growth strategy to address the need of appropriate accommodation and service provision for this client group.

WMQ now operates seven specialised disability accommodation communities: WesleyCare Tewantin; WesleyCare Apartments Sinnamon Village, WesleyCare Jindalee, WesleyCare Apartments Coomera; Youngcare Woolloowin, Asher House at Wynnum and new additions WesleyCare Wynnum Apartments adjacent to Asher House and soon to be opened in late September our eighth service WesleyCare Apartments Maroochydore. All of these (except Youngcare Woolloowin) are located on or next door to Uniting Church land. In addition to developing further specialist disability



accommodation options in the future we will also be partnering with other developers who will construct the buildings with WMQ providing the on-going care and support.

Following recent WMQ Board approval (supported by approval from the Finance, Investment and Property Board) and subject to a successful development application, WMQ will be purchasing land from the Queensland Synod/South Moreton Presbytery at Thorneside for the purpose of developing further specialised disability accommodation.

Enjoy reading this moving letter from Todd, one of our original WesleyCare residents.

*Dear Staff,*

*Given the current circumstances, I realise that I may not get the opportunity to thank all of you individually for your part in helping me during my 7.5 year journey at Sinnamon Park before Kat and I leave on Monday morning, so I want to take this opportunity to do so.*

*Though I was 29 when I moved here on 27 December 2012, living at Sinnamon Park gave me the opportunity to experience the many rites of passage that others go through in their late teens and early twenties, even in small ways. I remember thinking during my first week it was a thrill to eat ice cream at 1.30pm while watching the Boxing Day Test uninterrupted. That was the day that I knew that the move became real.*

*Living here has taught me so much, but most of all it helped me discover what I was truly capable of. Believe it or not I entered number 14 incredibly scared and with a bundle of nerves. Though on a subconscious level, I knew I wanted to live independently for a long time, I didn't act on that feeling until two years before I arrived here, because I was terrified that I would fail and would have to go back to live with my parents.*

*I shouldn't have worried though because it has been a privilege living here. I've done my best to recognise this luck each and every day. Sometimes I have failed. There have been bumps in my road to freedom but living here also taught me how to safely make mistakes.*

*Over my time here I think there have been over 100 staff that have walked through the doors, each of whom have brought something unique to my life. It's not easy having someone come into your home every day. However, what most people fail to recognise is that it's hard for you guys too. Each day you've been asked to enter fourteen sacred spaces, to try and meet the needs of up to seventeen different people, often at the same time. The sacrifices that each of you have made don't often get recognised, particularly by the residents, so I thank you. It's not an easy job that we ask you to do.*

*Obviously, the highlight of my time here has been my relationship and marriage to Kat. Growing up, I never thought I would meet someone I could fall in love with, much less to marry her. We both agree that living here made our relationship happen. Kat and I thank all of you, for your part in making it work. Wesley could have made the process hard and could have put many obstacles in front of our partnership. Thanks to your help, we've blazed a trail here, and now the NDIS has changed the rules so that interabled couples and families can live together in privacy and comfort. We're proud to be a part of the journey that made it happen. You should be too.*

*Moving away closes the most pivotal chapter in my life thus far. Though we're moving to a bigger place, my first step of independence will always occupy an important place in my heart. It is the place where I found myself, where I grew up, where I began to fulfil my potential, where I made life changing decisions, and where I found freedom.*

*As Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States, once said: Our greatest happiness does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed us, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits.*

*Yours, in Freedom,  
Todd*

**Supporting people living with mental illness:**

Over the last few years WMQ has been expanding and diversifying our range of support services in mental health and suicide prevention. There are currently over 17 unique programs from Hervey Bay to the Gold Coast. We remain committed to responding to gaps in service delivery and meeting the needs of local communities. Our services include support for people across the lifespan—from youth specific services such as headspace centres in Capalaba, Hervey Bay and Maryborough, through to specific support for isolated older people on the Gold Coast.

We have a large team on the Gold Coast working for people with severe and enduring mental illness for up to 12 months—focussing on improving skills to live independently, find work, improve relationships and learn how to manage their own mental health and well-being. We are also funded by the Department of Health to deliver over 1500 sessions of psychology and coaching per month to the residents in south Brisbane—including to children under 12 at risk of developing mental illness, women experiencing domestic and family violence, and those at risk of suicide or self-harm.

We also have a number of dedicated suicide prevention services—walking alongside people for three months following a suicide attempt and dedicated peer support for people who have been caring for someone who is suicidal. One of these services specifically focusses on supporting young men—Marcus Mission—named after a young man who passed away.

Our teams work closely with a number of health and hospital regions—often providing the community care component for people also receiving clinical mental health services.

In addition to supporting people in local communities there has been a focus on supporting the mental health and well-being of our staff. One of many practical initiatives within the WMQ staff team is we have trained 150 staff in mental health first aid and this has been of immense assistance in supporting our staff's well-being.

For some people these services can be both life giving but also life saving. One comment from a client:

“You are outstanding both professionally and very personable. That you went above and beyond and were very passionate about your vocation which is rare. That there was genuine compassion and the willingness to help me mentally and provide every option available to help me move forward. I appreciate this service was available to me as a potential life saving option as the refuge did not offer support, only caused further abuse and frowned on support outside of their refuge.”

**Residential aged care:**

WMQ was the first provider of residential aged care in Queensland with the opening of Wheller Gardens at Chermside in 1936. Today we operate 13 aged care facilities that provide a home, care and support for over 1000 residents. Over the last two years, we have opened our newest aged care home Dovetree at Sinnamon Village (home for 144 residents) and expanded an existing aged care home at Bray Park (Anam Cara) with two cottage style homes each with eight residents. The Anam

Cara cottages provide specialised care and support for people living with dementia—it focusses on involving residents in all aspects of daily living.

While we have placed great emphasis on rebuilding or renovating our aged care homes over the last few years (60 per cent of our homes are high quality and modern design)—the thing that makes the most difference for the people living in care is the passion, commitment, creativity and culture within the staff teams. We regularly receive positive feedback from residents and families celebrating the care and warmth of our staff and volunteers—this is what makes the difference. As much as possible we have tried to find ways to recognise and express the gratitude of the organisation for the contribution and hard work of our more than 1000 care staff in our aged care homes

Unfortunately, WMQ as for most aged care providers in Australia have had to cease further capital development due to the inadequate funding to sustain the quality of services that our elders deserve! The residential aged care system requires major reform and we eagerly await the findings of the Royal Commission in February 2021.

**Recognition of commitment to creating happy, healthy aged care communities:**

In July 2020, WMQ celebrated Annie Gibney, Director of Residential Aged Care for receiving the Inspired Influencer Award from The Eden Alternative—a global non-profit organisation founded in 1991.

The Eden Alternative Philosophy of Care is about providing residents with homes that are filled with laughter, children, beautiful gardens, animals, music and most importantly strong and warm relationships between residents, staff, volunteers and families.



**Our vision for reconciliation:**

Over the past 18 months WMQ has worked towards further embedding our connections and building on our relationships with local community, as we continue our journey of reconciliation.

David Paasi (known as Paasi) joined WMQ initially as a volunteer in the office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) providing guidance and assistance around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural sensitivities and providing support operationalising the WMQ reconciliation action plan (RAP).

Paasi is a prominent leader in the Zillmere Uniting Church in the process of candidating to be a Minister of the Word. From 1 July 2019 Paasi was appointed to the position of WMQ Indigenous Liaison Officer. This role is instrumental in building foundational relationships with both our Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander staff and externally within local community.

**Voice Treaty Truth – NAIDOC Week 2019:**

WMQ celebrated NAIDOC Week in 2019 with a celebration held at Wheller on the Park in partnership with Strong Women Talking (SWT). Over 160 people attended including Wheller on the Park residents, WMQ staff, many members from the local Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities and some external indigenous organisations. Newly elected member Anika Wells, local federal member for Lilley attended and participated, along with Councillor Fiona Hammond. Beautiful cultural dance was shared and performed by two amazing dance groups: the Torres Strait Islander Mabyug Dance Group and the Aboriginal Parents of the Holy Rosary School and children from the Little Tiddas and Little Buddas Dance Troupe.

Sono Leone, Founder and CEO of Strong Women Talking—Marigurim Mubi Yangu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation founded with a vision and passion to deliver culturally appropriate prevention focused workshops and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children in communities—delivered a powerful speech of sharing her “truth”.

The event was a tremendous success. Following a barbecue lunch including kangaroo sausages and Warrigal greens, our Wheller on the Park residents spent quality time participating in yarning circles with local Elders from the community, stories were shared, and some very special relationships were made.



Photo: Sono Leone and Elders yarning circle with Wheller on the Park residents.

Join Sono Leone and Danielle Sullivan at the virtual WMQ Exhibition Stand via the Synod portal at one of WMQ's live Q&As to hear how Wesley Mission Queensland and Strong Women Talking journey together.

**Launch of the WMQ Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan:**

During National Reconciliation Week from 27 May 2020–3 June 2020, WMQ further cemented its reconciliation journey intention by formally launching its Reconciliation Australia endorsed Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We are committed to journeying with our First Nation brothers and sisters on a path to reconciliation as we commit to specific deliverables over the period of the life of the Innovate RAP.

During National Reconciliation Week, our plans of bringing our people together with our friends from community to officially launch the WMQ Innovate RAP document were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Instead WMQ launched the first RAP virtually by video. We are extremely excited to be

on this pathway of reconciliation and look forward to our action as an organisation making a significant contribution leading to change.

We invite Synod members to read Our Vision for Reconciliation, which can be found in the WMQ Exhibition space on the Synod portal.

Watch our launch video here:

<https://youtu.be/ZBTuhD0js5c>

**Celebrating diversity should be fundamental to our DNA as a Christian organisation and as part of the Uniting Church. Celebrating diversity is about how we as individuals come together in respectful relationships where each and every person is valued equally and has the right to have their voice heard.** *Geoff Batkin*

#### **The Cooperative:**

Isaiah 43:18-19

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

## **the cooperative**

We were delighted to launch our new centre for collaboration, The Cooperative, in August. The Cooperative is a project in public collaboration in the spirit of public theology. Existing to make space for dialogue from all and any members of the public and for sake of the public good. The Cooperative is bringing unexpected conversation partners together and working toward real social outcomes—across faiths, across community groups and services, and across professional and academic disciplines.

We have launched a dedicated website that is hosting conversation and dialogue from contributors across the nation. Each week at least three new articles are posted including opinion pieces, reflections on art and beauty, and monthly forum discussions on texts that reflect and interpret society. We are also hosting regular town hall meetings, book clubs, and public lectures that can be viewed on YouTube. In 2021 we will announce our inaugural biennial theology series which will include annual conferences, lectures and workshops, and will culminate in a book on public theology.



Numerous other projects are in the works and in 2021 we will be sharing exciting news about further collaborative work in the city of Brisbane and across the country.

Having commenced this new missional activity, we look forward to growing partnership and networks, and finding new ways to host otherwise impossible conversations—for the common good and because of the Gospel.

Join Dr McRandal at the virtual WMQ Exhibition stand via the Synod portal at one of WMQ's live Q&As to hear about The Cooperative.

For more information on The Cooperative, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUIV3tc9aNDpC1URD3Y1TXw>

<https://thecooperativehub.com/>

#### **NewLife Brisbane:**

The NewLife Brisbane church plant launched on 3 March 2019. Over the last year NewLife have seen seven people baptised, over 30 people respond to the gospel for the first time, ten small groups start and grow, the start of a vibrant Kidzlife ministry, and overall growth from a core of 50 people to 150 regular attendees. NewLife is passionate about reaching out to the Brisbane community of young professionals, families, university students and youth to see lives changed by the power of the gospel. NewLife have a special outreach to Raymont College and a number of students have begun attending and finding faith. NewLife Brisbane has grown into a thriving worshipping community.

The covenant relationship between NewLife Brisbane and Albert Street Uniting Church is very important to both our communities. Albert Street Uniting Church provides worship facilities, logistical support, and office and meeting spaces for the NewLife leadership team and community activities. We have worked together on several ministry initiatives including Alpha courses and combined worship services. We are very excited to see our partnership grow and flourish, and look forward to seeing what God has in store for us all into the future.

#### **Pastoral care and chaplaincy team:**

Our Pastoral and Spiritual Care (PSC) Team normally consists of five full-time ordained ministers, three part-time lay PSC workers, two part-time retired ministers, and a team of dedicated volunteers. The PSC Team is primarily located at two different sites: Area North (AN) at Chermside and Area West (AW) at Oxley. The PSC Team has been restructured to streamline service provision and care. It is currently developing a PSC framework and strategic plan in order to meet the increasing demands of ministry within the aged care and community service sectors of our organisation. The PSC framework is based upon a model of care that promotes a proactive development of pastoral relationships in keeping with the holistic and multidisciplinary team approaches of the Eden Alternative™ and The Wesley Charter.

Our PSC Team has participated in a variety of training opportunities with UnitingCare and Meaningful Ageing and is committed to ongoing professional development and best practice pastoral and

spiritual care. Each week more than 1500 residents, staff and families from across our aged care homes and retirement living communities are invited to take part in worship services, Bible studies, and other activities that promote spiritual care and well-being. Our PSC chaplains, workers and volunteers visit with residents, clients, families and staff each day to offer pastoral care, prayerful compassion and spiritual blessing.

Providing pastoral and spiritual support during a global pandemic has certainly been very challenging for our team, but with creativity and commitment we have worked with our aged care homes to bring comfort and care to our residents, families and staff in these difficult times.

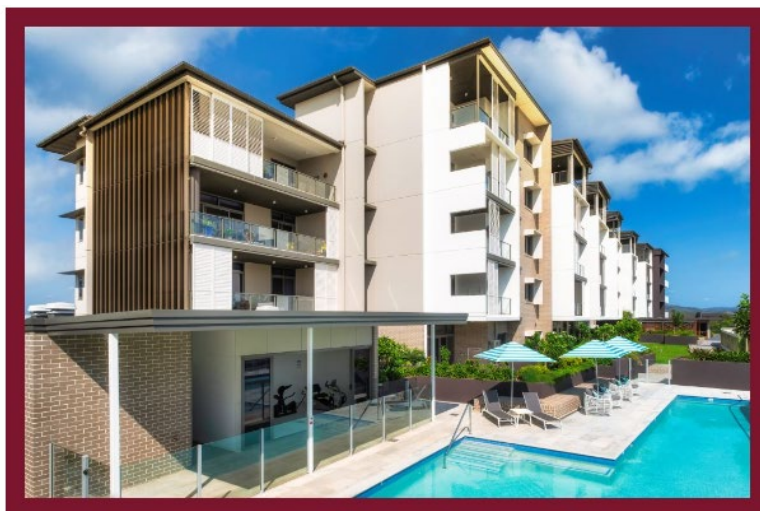
From 1 November 2020, WMQ is excited to announce the appointment of a new PSC Team Leader to give oversight to this important ministry and to develop opportunities to expand pastoral and spiritual care into our community services directorate.

### **Highlights:**

The most profound achievement during 2020 has been how our staff have responded with creativity, resilience and innovation during the unprecedented challenges of COVID across our service network. Despite these challenges there has been continuing growth and diversification in the services offered by WMQ and also our service footprint.

#### **Rosemount Retirement Living Community:**

For many years we have been deliberately developing the concept of integrated inter-generational communities supporting people from all ages, backgrounds, abilities and those living with special needs. In June 2019 Rosemount Retirement Community (stage 1 with 70 apartments) was completed and this adds a new dimension of community living and connectedness at Sinnamon Village. We expect to start stage 2 (the final stage) in 2022.



 **ROSEMOUNT Retirement Community**  
SINNAMON PARK

**ORCA:**

At both the 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Synods, WMQ reported on the ORCA project and are pleased again to share with Synod the growth of this significant program changing the lives of young people and their families.

An acronym for 'Opportunities, Readiness, Community and Abilities', The ORCA Project is a post-school option for young people with disability that includes training, work experience and ultimately employment. It is an opportunity for participants to build capacity, enhance their lives and find meaningful connections in the community.

Originally based at Albany Creek Uniting Church the program now also runs out of a space at Wesley Mission Queensland Chermside. At the beginning of 2020 The ORCA Project opened at a new location at Broadwater Road Uniting Church (Mansfield) in response to the requests for a program in the area.

The ORCA program has grown to have the capacity to run three programs. In total across the last two and a half years, we have had over 75 young people enrolled in the program at different stages. Some of these young people have graduated, some have moved to a new house, and others have found other programs or activities that suit their needs more at this point in time.

We have had a lot of interest from families on the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Sunshine Coast, Caboolture, Toowoomba and more regional areas of the state. While we commenced some initial conversations with Uniting Churches in both Ipswich and Toowoomba, the COVID-19 challenges of 2020 have encouraged us to slow down, consolidate and strengthen the current programs while we wait for things to settle.

The flexible model of The ORCA Project could mean that it can be adapted for other congregations that are in a welcoming community, with young people living with different abilities who are keen to get ready for work.

Rev Alison Cox who oversees the program will be available during the 35<sup>th</sup> Synod via the virtual WMQ Exhibition Stand on the Synod portal for members to have the opportunity to connect with Alison and hear firsthand the significant difference this missional program makes in the lives of young people with disability.

## Project Plenty

WMQ's journey with Project Plenty. "How can we as one church contribute most effectively to God's mission in Queensland and the world?"

We consulted extensively with the Project Plenty team and found the strategy and intent aligned with our own organisational strategic planning. Workshops were held with the WMQ Executive Leadership Team, WMQ Board, WMQ Council and Albert Street Uniting Church congregation.

Over 300 of our people had the privilege to hear from the Moderator and the General Secretary of the Queensland Synod, and to learn about Project Plenty at our annual Charter Day in October 2019.

Wherever we can we seek to develop collaborative mission responses involving WMQ, congregations and presbyteries engaging with people in need in a local context.

## Plentiful Leadership Program

WMQ welcomed the Synod wide leadership development initiative: the Plentiful Leadership Program. Eight of our emerging leaders are involved in the first cohort. The program is an investment in leadership for the sake of a flourishing church and aims to enable courageous, strategic and adaptive leaders now and into the future. The program is designed to embed best practice leadership principles, with a focus on the well-being of the leader in order to flourish as an individual and lead a team and organisation to its full potential.

The program is structured around skill and capacity building, deep practical application, and individual challenge and support to enhance each individual's gifts. The course is run through leadership development workshops (remotely delivered), group coaching sessions and a peer to peer mentoring program. Each participant has the opportunity to be both mentor and mentee.

There is enormous value for our staff to participate in this program as it enables and fosters collaboration, relationship and network building opportunities across all areas of the church. It further enables WMQ to ensure alignment between our own Leadership Development Program and that of the broader church.

## Challenges/risks as we progress

As mentioned earlier, the aged care and community services sector is facing unprecedented challenges with: two Royal Commissions (aged care and disability); the impact of COVID-19; negative media and consequent community perception arising from the Royal Commissions; unprecedented financial sustainability challenges (with 60per cent of aged care homes in Australia operating at a loss); difficulty in recruiting the staff we need in many of the service areas in which we operate. WMQ will need to continue to find operational efficiencies and additional service areas where we can generate a surplus, in order to deficit fund a number of missional programs which receive no or little government funding.

Whilst these challenges are significant, we are also responding to the growing service and support needs of an ageing population, as well as growing service responses for people living with disability and mental health issues (with increased government funding available to support people in need).

WMQ continues to maintain its reputation as an innovative and quality service provider within the broader community through government accreditation and regulatory requirements. Over time we have developed a diverse property portfolio that is suited for our mission and ministry, well located and has potential for further capital investment when the time is right. This question of timing will be revisited after the release of the final report of the Aged Care Royal Commission in February 2021.

Our challenge is to keep asking the question: why? Coming back to our core mission as part of the Uniting Church. Is WMQ well placed to respond to this community need at this time and in this place? Is this initiative consistent with our purpose as part of the Uniting Church to participate in the mission of God—towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people. This is the question that our board and executive leadership team keep coming back to. Why?

### **Preparing to farewell the WMQ CEO and welcome a new CEO**

This year marks a significant milestone for WMQ, with our beloved CEO Geoff Batkin AM retiring at the end of December. Geoff began as the inaugural CEO of WMQ in 1997 with an annual budget of \$24 million and 90 per cent of our mission profile focussed on residential aged care. Over the last 23 years, Geoff has increased our annual budget ten-fold (\$240 million) and has grown and diversified our community services sector to now comprise more than half of our business.

During this time Geoff oversaw the construction of Wheller On the Park, Rosemount Retirement Living and a number of state-of-the-art residential aged care homes (Anam Cara, John Wesley Gardens, Parkview and Dovetree). WMQ now has 1000 aged care places and 600 people forming community in retirement living locations around Brisbane. Geoff was also fundamental in the redevelopment of the Ann Street site which enabled construction of the nine story Wesley House building, home to the Albert Street Uniting Church offices and a variety of commercial tenancies.

Geoff has transformed the missional focus of our organisation to now include more than 80 community service programmes, employing over 3000 staff with more than 1500 volunteers. WMQ has partnered with local congregations, business entrepreneurs and national service providers to provide multi-generational services such as Hummingbird House (Queensland's only children's hospice), Youth Foyer (housing and support for young people), Youngcare, headspace, Supported Disability Accommodation, and a variety of individual programmes reaching out to more than 100,000 people each year.

WMQ's mission encourages us to walk alongside people in need, offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community well-being. Geoff Batkin AM is a living example of this mission and has been an inspiration to us all. He will be sorely missed.

**Rev Dr Peter Hobson**

### **Conclusion**

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Our prayer is that God continues to bless the mission and ministry of WMQ as part of the Uniting Church.

## **Proposals to the 35th Synod**

It is proposed that the 35th Synod receive this report.



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