



34 SYNOD 2019

Report from

Wesley Mission Queensland



Wesley Mission Queensland (WMQ) is an integral part of the Uniting Church in Queensland and operates as a mission activity of the Albert Street Uniting Church. Since its inception in 1907 WMQ's purpose has been to participate in the mission of God towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people. In and through this mission and ministry we are actively committed to "Uniting in Christ, acting with love, witnessing in faith and working for justice". Each year WMQ's services touch the lives of more than 100,000 people in need living in Queensland and also Australia-wide as we support members of the deaf community and their families through our Auslan interpreting services.

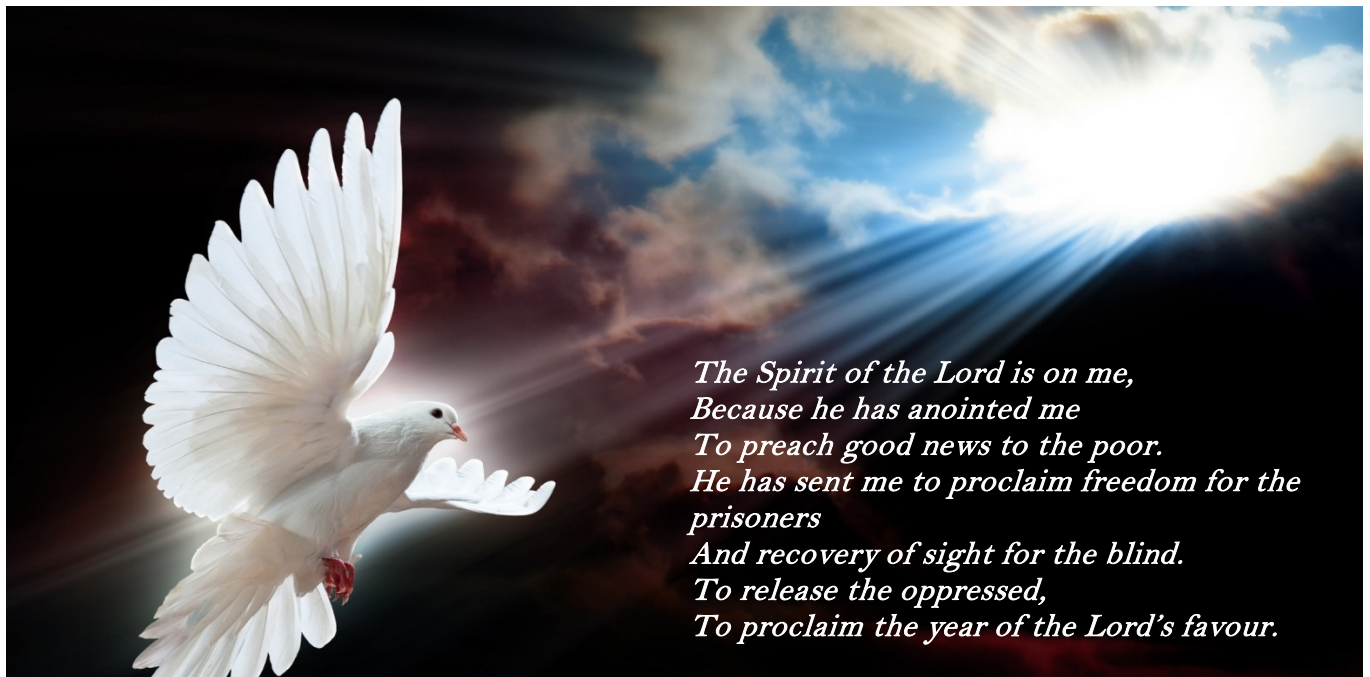
WMQ seeks to honour God's call to mission expressed in Micah 6:8

"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."

The two strategy and planning documents that are foundational to our mission are our new Strategic Plan 2019-2022 and the Wesley Charter. These strategic priorities are the heart of Wesley Mission Queensland, and at the heart of everything we do.

Our mission remains to walk alongside people in need, offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community wellbeing. WMQ is built on the values of hope, respect, compassion, empowerment, innovation, justice and integrity

Our strategic plan for 2019 and beyond continues to compel us to risk the way of Jesus and seek the coming kingdom of God as a place of transformation, reconciliation and hope for all people. Jesus's proclamation of his mission in Luke 4:18-19 has become a lens through which we read the Wesley Charter, and this in turn informs the way we think and work.



In June 2018 after almost 12 years of service to Albert Street Church and WMQ, we farewelled Superintendent Minister Rev Lyn Burden. The placement of Superintendent Minister serves the people of God through the ministry within the wider WMQ (as a member of the Executive Leadership Team and the WMQ Board and WMQ Council) and through leadership of the ministry, mission and worship life in the congregation at Albert Street Uniting Church.

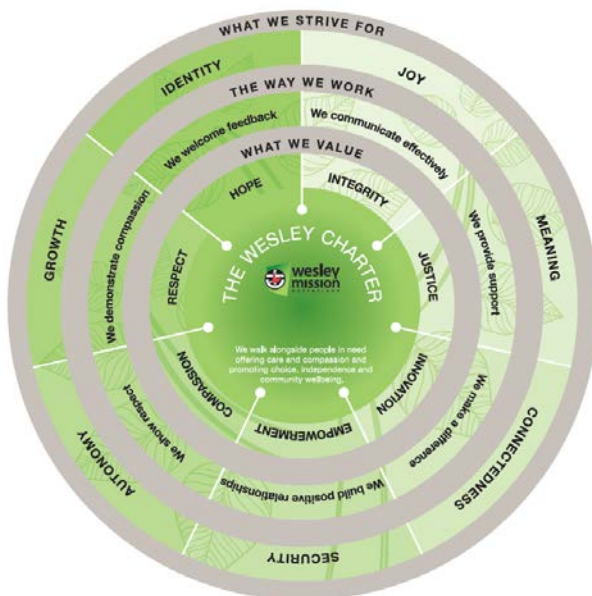
Through her role as Superintendent Minister Lyn built relationships with a wide variety of people from many different walks of life, cultures and beliefs across the life of WMQ. Lyn played an important leadership role in enhancing the Christian understanding of why the church engages in community services, and building and enhancing the staff and volunteer culture

within WMQ. The Board and Council are deeply grateful for Lyn’s tireless commitment, hard work and Christian leadership which made a significant positive impact on the worship, witness and service of WMQ.

We were then blessed that the Rev Dr Peter Hobson’s call of discernment led him to the Superintendent Minister role (from June 2018). Peter Hobson has now been in the role for almost 12 months and we are grateful for his exceptional leadership and positive influence on WMQ’s life and witness. Peter has given a significant commitment to visiting a wide range of WMQ services and building strong relationships with WMQ staff and volunteers and leading the Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team. His influence on the new WMQ Strategic Plan and the worship and witness of Albert Street have been profound.

Our culture

The culture of WMQ is built on the values of hope, respect, compassion, empowerment, innovation, justice and integrity; and it is only because our 3000 staff and 1500 volunteers continually strive to live out our values, mission and vision that we are empowered to support those in need within the community.

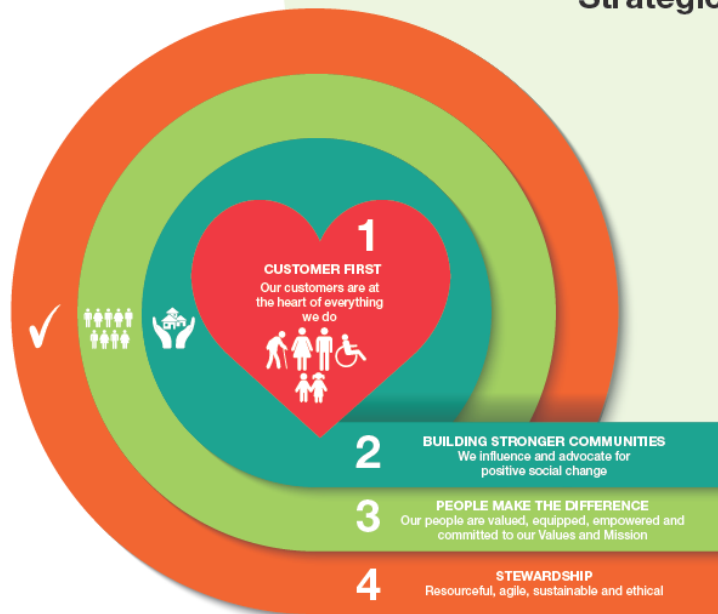


The Wesley Service Charter remains at the core of all we do. The Charter exemplifies how our Christian purpose, mission, vision and values are at the heart of “who we are”, “whom we are” and “what we do”. The Charter describes “What we value”, “The way we work” and the outcomes “What we strive for”. The value of the Charter is in its capacity to enhance conversations throughout the organisation that focus on our purpose, mission and values—these conversations strengthen the organisational culture at the heart of who we are and why we exist.

WMQ and the services we provide are diverse and special. As a faith-based organisation we believe everyone is important and God’s love is for everyone. Each day we interact with thousands of people, all who have different goals, views, beliefs, backgrounds, abilities and, most importantly, are in need of our support.

Our heart – strategic priorities 2019-2022

Wesley Mission Queensland Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022



wmq.org.au

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



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 wage, 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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The four Key Focus Areas and individual Goals will guide our strategy, planning and decision-making over the next four years.

Organisational snapshot

Each year Wesley Mission Queensland supports over 100,000 people with care services: 25,000 older people and 75,000 children, young people and families.

Wesley Mission Queensland employs around 3,000 staff and is supported by 1,500 volunteers. The annual operating budget for 2018/19 is \$200m.

WMQ services:

- Albert Street Uniting Church
- Residential aged care
- Home and community care
- Retirement living
- Therapy, respite and wellness services
- Supporting the deaf community
- Child care
- Food, housing and emergency support
- Youth and family support services
- Disability services
- Mental health services
- Palliative and end-of-life care for children and adults

1. Focus over the past 18 months

1.1 WMQ continues to grow in response to people in need

Our previous strategic plan set us on a path of planned and responsive growth in response to emerging community need. We have continued on a path of:

- Redevelopment and or significant renovation of our older aged care homes
- Growing our service responses for people living with disability
- Growing our range of services for people living with mental illness
- Growing support services for children, young people and families including our palliative and end-of-life care services (Hummingbird House and Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids)
- Expanding our retirement living offerings (Rosemount at Sinnamon Park).

Our new Strategic Plan 2019–2022 strongly reflects our mission, to walk alongside people in need offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community wellbeing.

The current environment of the aged care and community sector particularly with the two Royal Commissions (Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability) further provides a focus lens for service growth and development in providing quality compassionate care for our elders and for people living with disability. We will continue to grow our support services for those living with mental illness and in suicide prevention.

Advocating for and supporting older Australians

WMQ collaborates with UnitingCare Queensland and the wider UnitingCare Australia network in advocacy for a client-focused quality and sustainable system of accessible support services for older Australians and participates in the advocacy activities of UnitingCare Australia, including much-needed focus on aged care services.

We have expanded our residential aged care communities with the addition of Dovetree Residential Aged Care Community opened in July 2018 and the Anam Cara Cottages (dementia specific) opened in February 2019, and have also grown our provision of in-home care services.

We welcome the introduction of the new Aged Care Standards which come into effect from 1 July 2019 and have been working towards readiness for this significant change. Implementing these new standards will involve additional cost for WMQ and the wider aged care sector.



WMQ residential aged care communities have been on a journey towards obtaining full accreditation in all 10 principles of the internationally recognised Eden Alternative Philosophy of Care. The Eden Philosophy promotes loving companionship, empowerment and spontaneity and encourages environments that include animals, children and plants. This is a significant strategy to ensure our communities are truly person-centred, home-like environments promoting choice and independence for residents to live their best life.



All of our 13 aged care communities have maintained full accreditation with all of the 44 Aged Care Standards for over five years. In the current regulatory environment this is a very positive outcome—implementing the Eden Alternative Philosophy has strengthened our customer focus and service quality systems.

Advocating for and supporting people living with a disability

As the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) gains momentum, WMQ is connecting with families and the NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) to facilitate best outcome services for existing and new clients. The system is designed to be focused on the client providing choice, control, independence and positive life outcomes. For many however, the system is proving very hard to understand, access and navigate and therefore many have experienced poor service outcomes.

WMQ has successfully advocated for increased support options and funding for all existing clients and this experience is proving true as we support new clients to access the NDIS system.

There is a significant unmet need for provision of appropriate Supported Disability Accommodation for people living with disability with high and complex care needs. WMQ operates five supported disability accommodation communities that assist this client group. These include Wesley Care Tewantin, Youngcare Apartments Sinnamon Village, Youngcare Apartments Coomera, Youngcare Wooloowin and Asher House at Wynnum. All of these (except Youngcare Wooloowin) are located on (or next door to) Uniting Church land.

WMQ has an extensive development plan to provide appropriate supported disability accommodation options for people with high and complex care needs over the next five years. There will continue to be a strong emphasis on partnering with Uniting Church congregations that have a shared missional goal to support people with disability and engage in practical mission in their local community.

WMQ continues to support the deaf community (7,000 people across Australia and their families) through providing the National Auslan Interpreter Service (NABS). NABS provides interpreters for deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing people who use sign language and would like an interpreter for private health care appointments throughout Australia via face-to-face interpreting or a video remote (online) service.

Growing our mental health and suicide prevention services

Our mental health services continue to grow and reach more people predominantly in South East Queensland and on the Fraser Coast.

One such example has been the establishment of Marcus Mission suicide prevention (supporting young men) in 2018. WMQ was approached by and financially supported by the family of a young man who was lost to suicide. To achieve a reduction in the number of young men attempting to take their life or dying by suicide, WMQ and those involved in Marcus Mission offer support to build the skills, knowledge and connections of young men as well as their families, friends and communities by providing resilience-building workshops, volunteer mentoring and particularly suicide prevention workshops and training.

Full-day, half-day and tailored workshops and presentations are offered that draw upon the latest research in suicide prevention. The workshops support people to recognise warning signs that someone may be at risk of suicide and build the skills, knowledge and confidence to take appropriate action.

1.2 Partnerships and collaborations with Uniting Church congregations

Where there is an aligned mission strategy, WMQ is seeking to build or sustain collaborative mission and service responses for people in need in partnership with Uniting Church congregations. Some examples include:



Supported disability accommodation development in early stages



ORCA Project



Crisis care and accommodation service

toowongunitingchurch

Toowong and Jahjumbeen Child Care Centres at Toowong Uniting Church



The Gap Child Care Centre at The Gap Uniting Church



Supporting those at risk of homelessness program based on Ipswich Uniting Church property



Specialist youth housing service

We are currently commencing initial discussions including planning and feasibility options for developing supported disability accommodation on Uniting Church property aligned with congregational mission plans.

1.3 Our commitment to reconciliation

As part of the Uniting Church, WMQ is working to implement the WMQ Reconciliation Action Plan. This plan outlines a range of initiatives, employment strategies and community support engagement and advocacy initiatives. Respectfully journeying with Australia's First Peoples is a goal within our new Strategic Plan as we strive to build stronger communities.

Many of our child, youth and family support services provide a range of support services and community engagement opportunities for Indigenous Australians. We also support some Indigenous organisations to achieve their mission through professional support, use of offices and community buildings.

Implementing this plan over the next four years will be a significant focus for WMQ.

One of our projects over the past 12 months

Wesley Mission Queensland's vision for reconciliation is for all people to stand unified in an equal and inclusive future. We commit to enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and celebrating diversity.

WMQ is collaborating with the family of Pastor Don Brady (Kawanji), a prominent Aboriginal leader in Queensland through the 1960s and 1970s, to help tell his story. Kawanji was a pastor at the Leichhardt Street Methodist Church in Spring Hill from 1962–1972 and was also involved in the Albert Street Methodist Church.

Kawanji remains an inspiration to Aboriginal Australia in the contemporary struggle for a voice in the Constitution, equity and access for services aimed at “closing the gap” and for reconciliation, justice and restitution. Fundamentally it is the story of a man formed by a spirituality of compassion, which extended to the fight for justice.

Kawanji was a kuku-yelangi elder, born on the penal government mission Palm Island in 1927, though the country of his father and forebears is in the Palmer River area on the Mitchell River watershed of Cape York. After training at a NSW Bible college he was an itinerant pastor and labourer in northern New South Wales. The family moved back to Queensland destitute until Pastor Brady established a role in Brisbane under the sponsorship of the Methodist Church.

As the more overt struggle for Aboriginal rights developed around the early 70s, Kawanji became an activist, aligning himself with so-called radical causes. In the heated political climate of Queensland under Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the Methodist church controversially decided to withdraw its support from Pastor Brady. He continued his work through the Indigenous community services established in Brisbane in that era and became an inspirational leader in the wider community, engaging in various social justice protest actions.

YALANYA The story of Pastor and Warrior Don Brady (Kawanji) told through the eyes of his children will be published and available for purchase later during 2019.

2. Highlights:

2.1 Opening of Dovetree Residential Aged Care Community at Sinnamon Village

Dovetree Residential Aged Care Community of 144 aged care suites (including day/overnight respite, therapy centre and 150 car parks) opened in July 2018.

We have allocated one level (36 suites and community spaces) to provide transitional support for adults living with a disability with high and complex care needs. It is envisioned these residents will reside in WesleyCare Jindalee for up to two years while WMQ develops more permanent purpose-built supported disability accommodation.



Dovetree aerial view (also showing the early construction of Rosemount Retirement Living)

2.2 Rosemount Retirement Community

Stage 1 – Sinnamon Village

Stage 1 development of Rosemount Retirement Community consisting of 70 mainly two and three-bedroom apartments commenced in February 2018 and will welcome new residents in June 2019. Stage 1 sales are progressing well.

Stage 2 development consisting of 65 one, two and three-bedroom apartments will commence before end of 2019 and should be completed at the end of 2020.



Rosemount Retirement Community

As with the Wheller Gardens community at Chermside our Sinnamon Village community is master planned around the concept of integrated and inter-generational community living. The above two developments and the wide range of existing services and community engagement opportunities are integral to the master plan philosophy.

2.3 Anam Cara cottages

The two eight-bed Anam Cara cottages development was completed in February 2019 with the first eight-bed cottage “Clear Mountain” now occupied. The cottages are attached to the 105-bed Anam Cara Residential Aged Care Community at Bray Park.

The cottages were designed to provide residential aged care for people living with dementia in a small home-like environment, supporting independence to undertake day-to-day activities they would normally enjoy in their family home. The model is proving extremely successful and is receiving great feedback from families and the community.



2.4 The ORCA Project

At the 33rd Synod, WMQ reported on the new placement of the Rev Alison Cox to the position of Project Officer Disability Inclusion Innovation. The seed was sown and from that seed grew ORCA. 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 also an opportunity for participants to build capacity, enhance their lives and find meaningful connections in the community.

The ORCA Project, based at the Albany Creek Uniting Church, follows a four-stage progressive pathway known as WORK (Welcome, Organised, Ready, Keen) that participants take on their journey to successful employment.

In April 2019 the ORCA team held a celebration to showcase their work and learnings. The showcase welcomed around 250 guests including family and friends of the ORCA team, business owners in the local community, work experience hosts and local Members of Parliament.

ORCA participants worked hard during the first term to prepare for the event. They were able to showcase their enterprises and sell their products including pet treats, bath products, upcycled T-shirt bags and ORCA supporter merchandise.

The ORCA Project continues to grow with endless imaginative possibilities and opportunities.





2.5 Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids

In September 2018 Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids joined Wesley Mission Queensland at the request of the Hopewell Board, following a comprehensive process of review and planning. The major focus was the synergy between Hopewell and WMQ and particularly the alignment of mission and values of both organisations.

Both organisations are based on values of respect, integrity, hope, compassion and empowerment and were established as a response to meet human need through putting the Christian faith into action.

Hopewell Hospice Inc. was established by co-founders the late Rev Dr Ian Mavor OAM and Deirdre Hanna in 1994 and had become an iconic and valued service on the Gold Coast, with a long and proud history providing quality-of-life care for terminally ill people and their families.



2.6 Welcoming Newlife Brisbane to Albert Street Church

The WMQ Council and Albert Street Uniting Church, with significant encouragement and financial support from Moreton Rivers Presbytery, have entered into a missional partnership with NewLife Robina (South Moreton Presbytery) in establishing a contemporary worshipping and witnessing church plant in the Brisbane CBD. Newlife Brisbane, a church plant of Newlife Robina, officially launched on 3 March, 2019 with a service of worship and celebration and has already begun gathering a vibrant community of committed people seeking to partner with other churches in the city of Brisbane to “see more people, more like Jesus”. This is done through the formation of authentic community, gathering worship and practical discipleship. We can't wait to see what God does in the future through this unfolding partnership.



3. Priority Directions

WMQ embodies the Priority Directions as part of the Uniting Church as we participate in the mission of God towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people.

3.1 Christ-centred, at prayer, and listening

In all our residential communities people gather to celebrate the goodness and generosity of God. Worship services reflect the diverse traditions and needs of our residents, and enable them to find joy, hope and meaning in their everyday situations. Our Pastoral and Spiritual Care team find many opportunities to prayerfully listen as they walk alongside residents.

Albert Street Uniting Church sits at the heart of WMQ and is the central place of worship. Through worship, witness and service, the congregation continues its 170-year legacy of expressing the Good News that God continues to transform the world bringing hope, reconciliation, transformation and justice for all people. The Albert Street Uniting Church is committed to being a welcoming community—proclaiming the Good News of Jesus the Christ, building faith and compassionately serving in mission with faithfulness, integrity and openness.

3.2 Discipleship

Since making its first acts of compassion and kindness in 1847, the Albert Street congregation has had a vital presence in Brisbane, particularly among people who have found themselves in need or on the margins of society. Albert Street Uniting Church continues to be actively involved in three distinct missional services for people in need:

Art from the Margins (AFTM) began to enable artists experiencing disadvantage the opportunity to exhibit their art. A simple concept has grown into a ministry which empowers people living with disadvantage to grow in confidence, gain new friendships and networks and develop their artistic talents. AFTM has been instrumental in bringing artists together and bridging the gap between artists living in isolation and the wider public community.

In 2018 Art from the Margins celebrated 10 years of supporting artists on the margins of society. In 2019 AFTM will be hosting a national art prize for outsider art. This is an amazing feat, and recognises the incredible work being done in this ministry.

Brisbane Emergency Relief hub and community meal – Fortitude Valley

The ER hub operates five days a week and provides assistance and support to thousands of people experiencing financial crisis or hardship, providing drop-in emergency relief, case management, financial resilience, counselling and advocacy services.

Over 200 volunteers each month from all walks of life offer themselves in service through the community meal ministry. The community meal operates across the week with a range of meals and lunches with a focus on providing meals after-hours and on weekends. In 2019 there are currently three meal options across the week.

Each main public holiday including New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Queen's Birthday and Labour Day a two-course lunch is provided. On Christmas day a four-course menu is offered and provided in collaboration between the Brisbane Maori community, Community meal and Community canteen.

English Corner at Wesley House provides the opportunity for people from non-English speaking backgrounds to come together for friendship, networking and fellowship supported by volunteer English teachers. Participants also enjoy conversation using the Gospel message as the medium. Many friendships are made across cultural groups, as well as having the opportunity to explore Australian culture in a safe environment. In a world that seems more and more divided over difference, each week up to 50 or more people gather together to build community. This is a wonderful ministry that continues to grow as hospitality is extended and God's love is shared.

3.3 Connecting with communities

WMQ community services seek to address areas of concern and need in the community and are shaped by a commitment to sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with marginalised people. As such, many of these services are mission-focused, and not fully funded by government resources.

Within WMQ's new strategic plan Key Focus Area 2: Building Stronger Communities, Influencing and advocating for positive social change, WMQ is committed to establishing a hub for promoting public theology and social justice located at Albert Street Uniting Church in the Brisbane CBD. Over the next few years, a new ministry will emerge that seeks to engage the wider community with the kingdom ideals of love for neighbour, and justice for all. This will be a centre for listening and learning, advocacy and resource sharing, and the prophetic promotion of the gospel in the public square.

3.4 Youth, children and families

WMQ is one of the largest providers of youth services in the Beenleigh, Logan and Gold Coast regions. We continue to operate a range of youth, housing and family support services out of the following areas: Robina, Logan City, Eagleby, Ellen Grove, Coomera, Pacific Pines, Inala, Woodridge, Beenleigh, Southport, Runaway Bay and Palm Beach.

We operate four child care centres, in-home care and family day care programs. Three of our child care centres are co-located with Uniting Church congregations.

Our Mabel Early Learning program partners with Parents Next and other community organisations to provide ADJUNCT care for parents of any age who are taking part in study, work readiness or personal development activities. The program also offers parenting support and playgroups.

WMQ operates Queensland's only children's hospice Hummingbird House which has developed a strong reputation (since opening in October 2016) and a flexible approach to meeting the needs of children living with life-limiting conditions and their families. Services include palliative care, respite care for families and their children, end-of-life care and supporting families after the death of their child. Services are offered at the house and also in the family home.

The following letter is one of so many offered by Hummingbird House families.

I would love to share Ivy's story with you and Hummingbird House.

Ivy was born by caesarean section at 33 weeks, following premature rupture of membranes. Ivy died in her mother's arms a little over 24 hours after delivery and spent those precious hours with her family. The family share how strong Ivy was during this time and the impact she had on their lives. Ivy was transferred to HH after death, along with her family mum, dad, big brother, and big sisters.

1. What is our most memorable part of staying with Ivy at HH?

Mum and Dad: *Creating memories with Ivy that we would never have again such as giving her 1st bath, taking pictures out in the garden with the fountain and taking footprints of all of us which later became a beautiful piece of artwork that we will forever cherish.*

Big brother: *To be able to say goodbye to Ivy.*

Big sister #1: *That we were able to create memories with Ivy that we wouldn't be able to make elsewhere.*

Big sister #2: *To spend our last moments together before she left.*

2. What did coming to HH mean to your family?

Mum and Dad: *The kids got to be kids without all the adults coming and going. A place to hide away and just concentrate on our family without having to worry about all the domestics of running a household. Hummingbird House took great care of us and supported us while we mourned, grieved and said our final goodbyes to Ivy.*

Big brother: *It felt like her loss meant something and that it was important.*

Big sister #1: *We were able to have the freedom to do our own thing which you don't always get, for example: I could stay in my PJs all day without anyone telling me I couldn't. This made it easier to say goodbye.*

Big sister #2: *To say goodbye to Ivy in a lovely place without too many people and noise.*

3. What would you like the world to know about Ivy?

Mum and Dad: *Ivy was our beautiful very loved and wanted precious daughter.*

Big brother: *She was very cute and loveable.*

Big sister #1: *She is our Ivy, the most precious sister I could ever have and this is her story.*

Big sister #2: *That she was the most loveable and beautiful girl I have ever seen. And cute.*

4. What matters most?

Mum and Dad: *The extra time we could spend with Ivy in a comfortable quiet place.*

Big brother: *Ivy had no chance to live her life to the full but we were able to with the help of Hummingbird House give her the freedom she could have.*

Big sister #1: *That we were able to give her the most love and care until the time came to say goodbye.*

Big sister #2: *We were able to spend all our love and time together before she left.*

We all think it's important to share Ivy's story. It's these life stories that can help other families as they begin to take the same journey and it's these experiences that can enlighten others to make the memories and enjoy the precious moments with their child as in the end this is all you have left.

Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids

As mentioned earlier in this report, Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids joined the WMQ family in September 2018. Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids have provided the Gold Coast community an innovative, professional, compassionate and caring service over the past 25 years. WMQ is honoured to now be stewards of this long-standing community service.

The following prayer was shared by co-founder Deirdre Hanna in March 2019 as Hopewell Hospice and Paradise Kids celebrated their 25th anniversary:

'If the only prayer you say in your whole life is thank you that will suffice—so let us begin with a prayer of gratefulness for these 25 years: for a quarter of a century of love and compassion through hospice care; for these buildings donated by the community; these people gathered here today all part of our story, and the story of hospice in our wider world; the 1743 residents who have spent their last days with us, their families who receive bereavement support and who come back in hope and love for the memorial services; for the outreach into people's homes as hospice in the home; for the development of Paradise Kids where 4000 or more children have received illness support and grief counselling and play therapy; the respite guests who create community while their carers receive well-deserved care themselves; we thank you for these beautiful gardens all donated including the wonderful team of gardening volunteers led by Val; for the café which has become a hub of nourishment for our groups; for the Women's Group which every week provides company and inspiration; for The Blenders whose songs accompanied Ian who was their chaplain, singing to him as he lay dying and for our co-founder Rev Dr Ian Mavor himself whose social justice mission, passion for education, compassion and ministry to those who Jesus loved, the poor, the sick, the dying and the children, left a lasting Legacy. For all these gifts of abundant love and the banquet of hospitality provided for and by Hopewell—we say Thank You. Amen.'

4. Challenges/risks as we progress

4.1 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (ACRC) as the title suggests is intended to be focused on quality and safety, improving the aged care system for those who need support now and into the future. It starts with the recognition that “ageing is a natural part of life. It is the right of every person to be a valued and respected member of their community that starts at birth and does not diminish with age. The rights of all people must be respected regardless of age or any vulnerability or disadvantage.” (Quote from National Director UnitingCare Australia Statement to the ACRC).

WMQ as part of the national UnitingCare Australia network welcomed the ACRC as a wide-ranging review of the aged care system. WMQ is working closely with UnitingCare Queensland as together we organise and plan our responses for the ACRC.

The ACRC will consider fundamental questions:

- Does the aged care system meet the needs of residents and families and the expectations of the Australian community? Much of the evidence already before the ACRC is indicating substantial positive change is required.
- Is the system viable or sustainable for the future? The current financial performance of 47 per cent of aged care homes (as per a national benchmark survey) indicates they operate at a loss. Related questions of “who pays”; “how much—the balance between personal contribution and government contribution”; what is the cost of aged care services as the population ages?
- The effectiveness of the systems of quality and regulatory oversight.
- How does the aged care system encourage choice and more control for those using the system? What is the most effective balance between community based, in-home care and residential aged care options? How does the aged care system best interact with other health care systems?
- The reasons for the difficulty in navigating and accessing aged care services. Approximately 110,000 older Australians are on waiting lists (up to a year for high care in-home care) to access in-home care support after being assessed as needing care.
- How do providers attract competent, professional, committed, creative and caring staff? It is already evident that salaries and wages are below market (compared with acute care) and adjusting this will be fundamental for the future to attract a growing workforce.
- How do we support retirees and older citizens who are seeking ways to give back to the community? The Uniting Church aged care network are champions of volunteerism and this is evident in passion, commitment, creativity and strength of our older volunteers.

It is however likely that the ACRC will present significant challenges for many aged care providers across Australia (including within the Uniting Church) as the ACRC probes into examples of substandard care as well as examples of innovation and high-quality care and support. This is already having impact on residents in care, people who access services in the community (plus those who are waiting for long periods to access in-home care and other services), families and also our staff.

It is our hope that the ACRC will provide compelling recommendations for significantly improving the system for the benefit of older Australians and that the Commonwealth Government (and state governments) will provide appropriate levels of funding and effective/wise regulation to underpin a quality, safe and accessible system. It is also our hope that the Australian community will be led to engage in a meaningful national dialogue and policy positions aimed at truly valuing elderly citizens. This will be a focus for our national UnitingCare Australia body as well as all Uniting Church aged care providers.

4.2 Funding in residential aged care

Inadequate funding in residential aged care is our most significant organisational challenge. While there is much political noise in the lead-up to the Federal election it is fundamentally clear from a range of previous enquiries into the aged care system as well as compelling evidence before the ACRC that the current funding envelope for residential aged care does not provide sufficient resources to meet the increasingly complex care and support needs of people needing residential aged care. It is hoped that the ACRC will carefully examine this issue and provide compelling recommendations to address the viability of the sector.

4.3 Competition, consolidation and market approaches to funding human services

As we have reported in recent Synods there is a significant increase in competition in aged care services, some disability services, some child care services, retirement living and other service areas offered by WMQ.

The assumption is that the market provides a level playing field and improves outcomes and choice for people accessing services—to some extent this is true. But there are many unintended consequences particularly for people with low or no capacity to contribute to the cost of services; these are the people that the church is called on to ensure that they receive quality and accessible support and services.

4.4 Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability

The Commonwealth Government announced the above Commission in April 2019 which will take about three years and cost \$500 million.

The national UnitingCare Australia network (including WMQ and UnitingCare Queensland) welcomes the Commission as a way of highlighting and implementing laws and practices to protect and enhance the wellbeing of people with a disability— "recognising that people with disability are equal citizens and have the right and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including respect for their dignity and individual autonomy." (Terms of Reference for the Commission).

This Commission will involve many challenges for service providers as there is not likely to be any time limit into how far back the enquiry goes. There will be difficulty for the Uniting Church in Queensland locating and accessing old records and even carefully articulating the responsibility for governance and control of some of the services for people living with a disability that operated before union and post-union.

Again, it will be essential for the Church in Queensland to collaborate and organise and respond and also work with UnitingCare Australia in developing national policy approaches.

For WMQ, UnitingCare Queensland and many other Uniting Church organisations it will be challenging to be actively participating in two Royal Commissions operating at the same time.

Conclusion

WMQ is proudly part of the Uniting Church expressing God’s call of mission in the world. As a large and complex organisation formed by and supported by the Albert Street Uniting Church congregation we see as fundamental to our future planning to seek to partner with congregations seeking to engage in collaborative services for people in need within their local community.

We also recognise a special role for developing new and innovative service models for people most in need within the community.

In the context of two Royal Commissions (Aged Care and Disability) both UnitingCare Queensland and WMQ recognise the need to collaborate and share ideas and resources with our sister organisations within the Uniting Church. Together, these Uniting Church organisations “is one of the largest networks of social services providers in Australia. It supports 1.4 million people every year across urban, rural and remote communities—and across a range of social services, including aged care. The Network articulates and meets the needs of people at all stages of life with a focus on those who are most vulnerable. We work with others for a unified public voice to defend justice, the need for good governance, and investment in the common good.”

May God richly bless the work and mission of all the organisations that provide support in the name of the Uniting Church.

Proposal

It is proposed that the 34th Synod receive this report.

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