

the aim

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Australian Indigenous Ministries

May-July 2014



Technology in the Outback

Irene Bula in Camooweal see article page 5

Our God is Able



by Council Chairman John Keane

For four days in February AIM held our annual Full Council Meetings in the rotunda at the rear of council member *Neil Bootes'* home in Rydalmere NSW. Field Council members *Richard Davies* (Canteen Creek), *Bob Quinn* (Pioneers) and *Jono Wright* (Camooweal) attended as did *Apenisa Rabai* (Chairman, AIM Church Council).

In the opening devotional session from Joshua 24, Jono Wright encouraged us to look back at what God has done. If we want to go forward we must not forget from where we've come. After receiving and discussing reports from the various centres, the focus turned to future planning for AIM.

We began by defining and confirming our core values and goals. We felt these were well expressed in focusing on 'servant hood in mission' and we developed a statement which we felt expressed this:

AIM is a servant organisation whose mission is to plant, partner and participate in Gospel ministry to Aboriginal people.

It was decided that this statement would be incorporated as part of the AIM constitution and expressed in our communications, literature and through our web site.

With regards to the important topic of **Marketing and Mobilisation**, we concluded that to effectively mobilise people for partnership with AIM (in whatever capacity that might be), we need to be effective in marketing,

with the aim being to create awareness of how people can be involved with AIM. This will be done through our new website, through the production of new attractive literature and visiting Bible Colleges.

This led to a discussion regarding **Future: Retirement Realities and Recruitment Necessities**. It was recognised that we need to promote and advertise the urgent need and opportunities that currently exist and will exist in the near future throughout AIM for replacement of senior personnel, including missionaries, team partners and administration personnel as well as mission mobilisers.

We have some mission centres with accommodation and a church but without personnel. We have aboriginal pastors and church leaders pleading for people to come out and provide support by standing alongside them and providing encouragement. We need people equipped with sound training who function well in a team setting, who are gifted to minister cross-culturally in often difficult situations and who have a supportive church background.

As a Mission, we acknowledge that our motto "**Our God is Able**" has stood the test of time and we have every confidence in the future as we continue to look to the God who supplies all our needs. In one of the devotional sessions during our meetings, *Rob Alley* shared from Matthew 28:16-20, commenting on the need to go to all peoples with the Gospel, and that those who go need to be relational and relevant to those to whom they go; this coupled with the sure knowledge that the Lord will be with us as we go, and that it is about achieving His goals.

reunion

It was a happy and misty-eyed reunion in January when *Miriam Charlie* and her son *Ishmael* met up with former worker *Dauhne Kuss* at her home in Mt Isa. Ishmael had not seen her since 1993 when she and her late husband Irvine left Borroloola after 8 years of ministry there. The last time Miriam had met up with them was at the AIM Centenary Conference in 2005. *Please continue to prayerfully remember Dauhne and our many other retired AIM workers.*





A cloud of sadness cast its shadow and brought a deep sense of loss across the AIM field as the homecall of *Sue Letcher* became known. These past two years have been a long and difficult journey, and Sue completed the final stage of that journey as she passed into the presence of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on 25th March.

Sue had faithfully supported *Cliff* as he entered AIM in 1994 as deputationist. In the early years with AIM she was busy with home and family responsibilities, but helped out when and where she could.

She was an organiser and doer who was always bright and enthusiastic. Sue was willing to spend herself in helping others but always with a concern for their spiritual growth and how to help them on to maturity. She could also laugh at herself and didn't mind sharing mistakes she had made.

When Cliff became Field Director Sue was free to travel with him. It was during these visits that strong bonds of friendship and fellowship were formed with workers and local believers. They both showed a genuine and all inclusive interest and concern for the Indigenous people across our field.

The Aboriginal people were very aware of her love and concern for them. That was reciprocated as they regularly and faithfully prayed for her (and Cliff) throughout her illness.

The visits across the field were very helpful when she served several years as assistant editor of *The Aim* magazine. Her early years as a school teacher came to the fore as she was so often able to find errant apostrophes while proofreading!

Sue happily exercised the gift of hospitality. Many of us will long remember with great thanks the relaxed and warm welcome to her home so generously offered.

Cliff and Sue were a wonderful example of a good marriage. Some have commented: *'They were best friends. You never heard frustration between them. They always seemed such good mates, and recognised each other's gifts.'*

'It was always good to see the respect and love Sue and Cliff shared with each other and the courtesy shown in the home.'

And now that life together is over. For Sue we rejoice that her time of illness and discomfort has ended and she is now with her Lord whom she loved, served, and glorified.

For Cliff we pray for comfort, strength and God's grace as he and the family adjust to life without her.



Thelma Dixon and Sue

Queensland Church Council

The Queensland Church Council will be celebrating their 30th Anniversary during their meetings to be held 6-8th June. The meetings will be held at the Riverway Convention Centre in Townsville with the theme *'Honouring the Past — Securing the Future'*.

Please pray that each Queensland Church will be well represented at the meetings and this special time of celebration, and please pray for those organising the weekend.



An indigenous Christian looked through the MPA books and asked, *'Where can I get some of those lovely pictures? They would be so helpful as I teach the people at church.'* The pictures were some of the many clear and useful drawing done by Jack Finch.

It was back in 1969 that the Lord led Jack and his family to MPA where he filled the great need of an artist. He came with much needed talent and also with missionary experience and fervour as he and his wife *Pauline* had served in PNG for a number of years.

His drawings have helped to bring the Bible stories to life for so many — in particular those who cannot read and those for whom reading is difficult. He gave careful attention to detail, studying Scripture carefully to ensure that his drawing portrayed Bible truth as clearly as possible.

News has been received of the homecall of *Cath Watson* — nee *Sykes*. It was after hearing a message at St Andrews in Strathfield that Cath felt her primary duty was to take God's message to the Aboriginal people. Following Bible College she joined AIM and did her probationary period in Menindee NSW.

She always remembered 'the epic trip' she did with fellow worker *Miss Joan Proctor* (dec) in 1942. They rode their bicycles 160 kms over what would have been little more than a bush track in order to be at Wilcannia for an Easter Convention. Cath felt it had been worth it all though, especially when a *Mrs. Jones* said, *'I won't want any supper tonight — I have been so satisfied and filled up with spiritual truths'*.

On The Mend

In April an enjoyable evening of fishing turned bad for *Agnes Fave* on Palm Island. She and *Emmanuel* were making their way off the rocks to return home, when she stepped off a slippery rock. In trying to support her fall, she put her left arm out and snapped the main bones close to her wrist in 2 places.

Even after some manipulation by the doctors they thought surgery may be necessary. So far the weeks in plaster have helped in the natural healing and setting of the bones. Though quite sore, she is managing but would appreciate prayer that the bones will indeed set without any operation being necessary. At the time of writing she was still hopeful of attending the Ladies Convention to be held in Cherbourg the first weekend of May.



His contribution at MPA went beyond artistic talent. He ministered to others on staff through his godly character, kindness and caring which was extended to all. Jack was also one who went out of his way to make any visitors to MPA feel welcome.

In recent years he and Pauline spearheaded the resetting and reprinting of the ever popular original MPA Sunday School lessons.

Marvellously, the entire series was ready for reprinting before illness began to take its toll on Jack.

Down through the years the talent he used for the Lord has been such a useful tool aiding missionaries throughout Australia and around the world. Jack went to be with Christ on 4th March, but no doubt his work will continue to be used of the Lord to bless and help others for generations to come.

Well done, good and faithful servant.



Cath married AIM worker *Les Watson* (dec) and they had their first appointment at Boggabilla NSW. Later they went to Normanton Qld. before Les returned to teaching in Victoria in 1955.

During retirement Les and Cath moved to Orana in Point Clare NSW and were key members of a faithful AIM prayer group for many years. The warm and generous hospitality Cath offered to all from AIM was always greatly appreciated.





Technology. It is moving ahead faster than many of us can keep up with — and it is not just in the cities and towns. Mobile phones, computers, iPads, email and now Facebook are being used by Indigenous folk in some of the most remote parts of Australia.

Richard and Sue Davies share about technology in their area:

Many of the people here have mobile phones even though we don't have mobile coverage. However that doesn't stop them from using them as an MP3 player and to hold movies and songs. These they get from the internet.

The school has quite a lot of technology and some time is spent with iPads in most classes, even the early childhood class. There are quite a few iPads in the community as well. We marvel at their durability as most have cracked screens but still function.

Many do internet banking and most houses have satellite dishes on them — some for TV, others for internet broadband. One house has 5 such dishes for various reasons.

Most of the people are on Facebook, and there has been trouble when people do some of their fighting online. People, especially kids, are very smart when it comes to new technology, and unfortunately pornography comes into that. However the good side of it all is we find people also want the Bible on mp3, hymns, movies etc. It is all about choice, which is the issue in whatever arena it is in.

Jono Wright shares:

I am having a great time with Facebook. I am having many good spiritual conversations with people in various places. Some of the guys out bush are using it to post Bible verses each day and sharing that way.

With Facebook people see what others post on it so a lot of non-Christian people see what the Christians are sharing. I only recently got onto it because I saw a lot of people using it in community. Some places have recently got mobile phone reception and others use it through internet in houses. I have seen lots of people sitting in front yards in the cool of the evening all sitting there doing Facebook.

People use it for prayer requests too, when they really need prayer they put up a post. Also people who are living

somewhere away from family in other areas can keep in touch more easily and makes them feel less lonely for family.

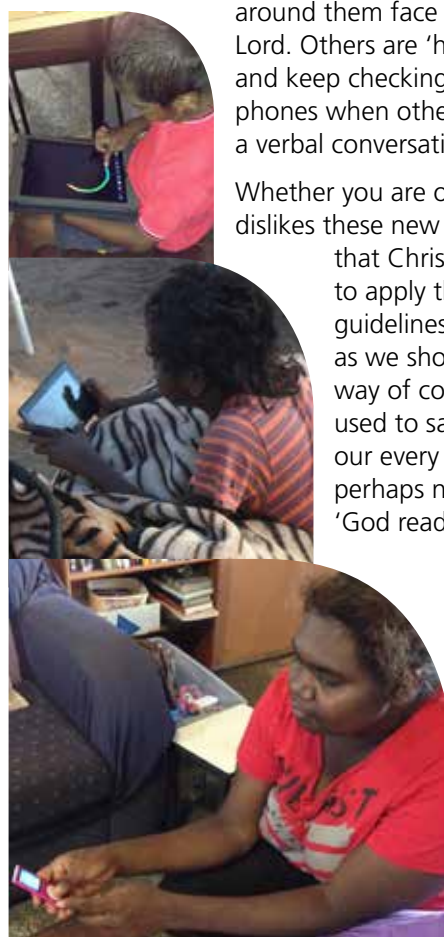
It's like all forms of communication — it can be used for good and bad. Yeah sure fights are started and people are offended but just as many good things are happening through it too.

Indeed, like most things it can be used for good or ill. One of the dangers with technology like Facebook is that what people write becomes instantly read by so many. 'Might be' stories shared have become a 'must be' that turns out to be hurtful gossip creating community fights. News of deaths have been quickly posted on Facebook long before immediate family has been contacted by the correct people, causing undo anxiety to the grieving.

Some are using Facebook rather than talking with people around them face to face about the Lord. Others are 'hooked' on Facebook and keep checking it on their mobile phones when others are trying to have a verbal conversation with them.

Whether you are one who likes or dislikes these new ways, please pray that Christians will be careful to apply the same Biblical guidelines in using technology as we should to any other way of communicating. We used to say that God hears our every conversation — perhaps now we need to say 'God reads every email and Facebook post'!

Technology and electronic communications is a growing part of our lives. Pray that we will all put it under God's control, so that it can be a useful tool to further His Kingdom.



Meet Our team



bible school days (Canteen Creek)

Grace Wright conducted the following interview with Rhonda Coats

Tell us a bit about your growing up years.

I grew up as the youngest of four girls in Glasford Illinois (pop. 1000).

So how does Rhonda get from the USA to be in Australia with AIM?!

I became a Christian at 14. Later when I attended Moody Bible Institute I was praying through a map of the world seeking God's direction of where to serve Him. Eventually circumstances drew me to pray about Australia. It was a **clear** and **immediate** 'peace that passes all understanding' that overwhelmed me at that time and has remained throughout the years.

The college had some brochures about missions working here. I was seeking a small, inter-denominational, English language based, Australian governed mission and AIM ticked all the boxes.

Nearly two years after applying to AIM and working through government forms I arrived in Australia in April 1982.

Give us a brief rundown of the places and types of ministry you've served in.

After orientation at MPA and visiting most of the Qld. and NSW centres, I was assigned to what was then the Darwin Bible College. Several months were spent in Gilgandra with Pastor Bill Naden (dec) prior to my move north.

Month long courses were held at the college and we conducted five day Bible schools at all our NT centres. After several years I also made regular visits to Barunga supporting the believers there. I was sad to be moved from all of that after 11 years. But together Esther Mackintosh and I carved out a ministry in Western NSW and also visited Qld. centres for a time. I helped her with 'The Aim' and took on her editorial cap when she retired in 2005.

Working in Literature and Resources sees me visiting much of the field each year. This is very helpful in working on 'The Aim'. Now living in Darwin it is wonderful to do some discipling, work among the former Retta Dixon Home family and visit folk in hospital. Several centres have been asking me to give Bible studies which I look forward to.

Can you share some of the highlights or great joys of the ministry?

One was when Uncle Sam Murray (dec) shared his story with me. It was put into print and God used that to reunite him with the family he was separated from at birth. That was very special.

At the College we helped Richard Driver, Cedric Tennyson, and the late Queenie Simon prepare to lead the combined Bible School at Barunga. We felt this was a great step forward in developing Aboriginal leadership. What a thrill

when they only needed me to ring the bell to begin.

Teaching God's Word is a privilege. How special it is when God gives me a front row seat as He helps people grasp His truth! Seeing Christians understand more of how great God is and how He can help them is so very special.

You told me 'It's a lot harder than I ever thought it would be!' What has been the most difficult challenge for you personally?

I have always had a strong belief and vision for the Aboriginal Church. I believe God gives them the gifts and abilities to have and lead an effective ministry for Him. When it has seemed they are not being entrusted with opportunities to use their God given gifts and take part in ministry it is hurtful and frustrating to me. At the same time, when some have been slow or unwilling to take up their responsibilities that is also difficult. Perhaps that is due to a lack of confidence stemming from the historical dominance of white people or from fear of reactions of those around them. Perhaps it is from the paternalism where others do for them rather than trusting them to do things. Whatever the reason(s) it is very difficult when we do not see strong Aboriginal Christians developing along with a strong Aboriginal church becoming reality.

Can you share some of the most important things God has taught you during your ministry?

I do not have to be busy doing things to try and gain God's favour. Like Phillip Yancey has said, 'There is nothing I can do to make God love me any more and there is nothing I do that will make Him love me any less. God loves me. That is it.'

It is HIS work and they are HIS people, not ours. Only He can bring people to Himself and give them understanding.

It is all about Jesus. It is not about me. It is wonderful to have relationships with Aboriginal people, but them having a relationship with Jesus is what matters.

I am not responsible for results. I am responsible to be faithful to Jesus.



discipling Sheila White in Darwin



Expression of Thanks from **Cliff Letcher**

For the past 20 years AIM has been a central focus in Sue and my lives as we have sought to serve our Saviour. This has resulted in very strong bonds of friendship and love between us and the AIM family and many of you who will be reading this magazine.

For others of you, you have read about us and many of you have prayed for us regularly. *We have valued deeply that bond in Christ.* One thing I have realised is that, even in these recent years when I have not been able to share directly in this work that bond has not been broken.

During these past couple of years or so we have been very aware of the support of this part of the body of Christ. It has been a very difficult journey for us, but a journey that provided us with a greater depth of love for our Lord and for each other.

Throughout all this time Sue wanted most of all to bring honour to our Lord and be a godly witness to others. We would not have been able to endure that time, or honour our Lord without His presence and your part in our journey.

Many of you have wanted to help but felt helpless. Let me tell you that you have helped by your prayers, cards, letters, emails, phone calls and even by text messages. It has been such a help to know that we have not been alone during this time.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the great historical event that demonstrates this power of God so that we can know that we too will become like our risen Lord. In the face of the death of a dear loved one life makes no sense without this sure and certain eternal hope.

Grief, as many of you will have experienced personally, is all encompassing and takes time to process. In my mind I understand the precious truths of the Gospel, in particular the resurrection, but in my heart the

loss of Sue overwhelms me. If that sense of loss is so great in this life, imagine what it will be like for many of those we love who are outside of Christ, and indeed the many we do not even know, who will face that eternal grief of separation from God and from loved ones unless they hear and respond to the good news of Jesus.

Again I want to thank you for prayerfully standing with us over the years, and with me now as I make the difficult journey of facing life without Sue. May we all prayerfully stand together for those who are facing eternity without our Saviour and Lord.

'Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.' 2 Corinthians 4:16-18



60 Years Ago...

the borrooloola school

Part 2

In 1954 Merv and Lelean Pattemore started the first school in Borrooloola at the request of the local people using one small room in their humble home. By 1956 this was no longer sufficient as the room was needed for their increasing family and the school was growing in numbers too. It would be necessary to build a new school.

The positive outcomes of the school were being noticed by the small community. When the newly arrived Native Affairs fellow learned of Merv's building project he offered the use of a truck and plenty of manpower to help get the pine logs for the framework.

Once the framework was up a local man asked Merv what he was going to use as covering. *'Stringybark I suppose'* was the reply. Feeling that wouldn't be good enough, the fellow offered Merv 44 sheets of brand new corrugated iron! This took care of the roof and one side of the new building.

Another man had an old, sizeable chook house which he offered. Once it was pulled apart it helped with the outside covering leaving just one end open. The Post Master heard of the need and offered a disused water tank. So Merv got busy with his axe and chopped, cut and flattened it out and this was enough to cover the one remaining end wall. The school was still not officially recognised or supported, but was meeting a great need and aiding immensely in the development of the people in their Christian walk and faith.

At one point the local Director of Welfare asked his local officer how many children he was feeding. When the officer talked to Merv he said with embarrassment, *'I'm not feeding them, you are!'* He then offered to take over the feeding of the school children and Merv happily gave him the pannikins and spoons to aid in the process.

A member of the Legislative Council visited Borrooloola and the school. When he saw first hand the work and progress of the students *'he was in raptures'* and made recommendation that assistance be given to the school. Reports had been made by the previous local Welfare Officer that Merv was *'only teaching religion'*. This wrongful report was accepted without investigation and seemingly because Merv was not a *'qualified'* teacher his request for assistance was met with *'You'll get no help from us'*.

Eventually the Director of Welfare made a visit to the school. His *'eyes popped wide open'* when he saw the work and achievements of the students for himself. He asked if he could take some of the lesson books back to Darwin which Merv happily allowed. Very soon after the school received desks, seats, and books!

The Pattemore family left Borrooloola in 1962 and other missionaries continued the school until 1964 when a government school was begun, complete with a *'qualified'* teacher.

So much was achieved by the Pattemores regarding the European education of the Borrooloola people. Many students made great contributions in and around their area. One of those was *Finlay*.

After the first year of schooling Finlay was sent out for station work by his father. Three months later he came in with a mate and said *'Mr Pattemore, this is Roy and he can read now.'* Finlay had taught him to read and to write! Years later Finlay went on to become the vice-president of the Northern Land Council.

Another was the late *Pastor Nero Timothy*. Nero had attended the adult classes when home from the cattle station work. It was while back out at work that Nero answered God's call to surrender his life to Him. He and 3 others from this little school attended Singleton Bible Institute. Nero served the Lord in several places before becoming Pastor of the Borrooloola Church. Even though he passed away in 1984, his witness is still revered in many areas of the Territory.





Australian Indigenous Ministries

General Director

Trevor (and Pamela) Leggott

Office Secretary

Jenni (and Robert) Alley

Field Director

Stephen (and Fiona) Bignall

AIM Office

PO Box 126 Taree NSW 2430

Phone 02 4754 3833

E: aim@aimpa.com

www.aimpa.com

AIM Representatives

NT Richard & Sue Davies
Canteen Creek NT 0831
P: 08 8964 1500

VIC Merv and Elizabeth Topp
Jan Juc Vic 3228
P: 03 5261 4550

WA Ian & Elaine Lindsay
Esperance WA 6450
P: 08 9072 0509

The Aim Editor

Rhonda Coats
PO Box 40555 Casuarina NT 0811

Assistant Editor

Grace Wright
Camooweal Qld 4828

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Springwood Printing Company Pty Ltd
P: 02 4751 6119
spc@springwoodprinting.com.au
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