



mylathina takila-ti Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai
Ola ma tumau i le alofa' 사랑 안에서 살기 Tinggal di dalam Kasih
Nofoma'u i he Ofa 愛中合居



B8 FRONTIER SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

Frontier Services continues to move into a new phase supporting those living in remote parts of Australia through disaster and emergency response. We have since the last Assembly managed to pay down all the debt and have maintained a healthy balance sheet. The main objective was to realign Frontier Services to focus on fundraising and create financial sustainability. I believe that we have accomplished this objective and are focusing on our growth to ensure we are a relevant agency of the Assembly providing practical and pastoral care for those in remote Australia.

Our 15 Bush Chaplains are at the heart of our mission. These extraordinary men and women are on the frontline, building community capacity in remote Australia one person at a time. Embedded in their remote communities they are the friendly knock on the door, the empathetic ear, wise counsel, sympathetic support and practical helping hands of Frontier Services. A Frontier Services Bush Chaplain is a unique ministry of the Uniting Church with a very practical hands on approach to Christianity. Frontier Services is a Public Benevolent Institution and as such is charity focused on spreading the love of God through meeting human need. We go out beyond church walls and spend time with people and walk alongside them in their times of need and joy.

In times of disaster or emergency out in the bush, we are in place ready to respond. We are strategically positioned to be the agency that is deployed during the essential phase of disaster recovery which is after the initial clean-up and the other agencies have left the area which is generally beginning 3-12 months. We are there for the long haul. At the time of writing, we are responding to communities recovering from bushfire, drought, and now plagues. We can do this simply because of our reach and the integration between our volunteers and Bush Chaplains. Our people are often engaged across the country with Police, Fire and Rescue, SES, and Army Chaplains. We have firsthand knowledge of all the isolated properties, the remote hamlets, First Nations communities, and the townships.

Hundreds of ordinary Australians volunteer their skills, time, and compassion to our Outback Links program. From grey nomads to city workers to retirees - we connect city volunteers with remote farmers and graziers who could do with an extra set of hands. Volunteering tasks include gardening, painting, cooking, farm chores, fencing, child-minding, or caretaking, but often the most important outcome is the human connection.

As an organisation it has been important to highlight the financial, physical, and emotional toll of drought or flood, combined with the added stress of social isolation, being a trigger for mental health issues. Frontier Services has been on the ground in Remote Australia providing wellbeing checks, mental health referrals, grief and loss counseling, suicide prevention, and domestic abuse intervention. As Australia's oldest bush charity, we feel a responsibility to not only walk alongside but also to speak up for those living in remote Australia. We actively seek out opportunities to do so at a governmental, agency, and public levels.

2. STRATEGIC PLAN

Our vision for the next 5 years is to grow our program to have 25 Bush Chaplains across the country. To grow our Outback Links program to have over 2000 volunteers ready to be deployed to where they are needed most. The financial growth to meet this need will be done in a sustainable manner. So we will ensure we always maintain 6 months of working cash flow. We use capital accumulated to fund Bush Chaplains when we have enough to ensure we can place someone for 3 years.

As part of the strategic review we are putting time into being data led and as such have spent a significant amount of time understanding our donors and how we can grow our funding support.

3. INNOVATION

Innovation is something that Frontier Services is continuing to push through. Since the last Triennial Assembly we have implemented a new database, an online shop and completely integrated email, website and social platforms. We have a number of automated donor journeys and online only campaigns. We have improved our systems and technology in such a way that more than half our gifts are now processed and receipted without anyone in the team having to be manually involved. This comes from a place where every single transaction was having to be processed manually. We have created online platforms that foster social interaction with our chaplains and the Assembly.

4. BUSH CHAPLAINCY

Our strategic commitment to grow our Bush Chaplaincy program to 25 placements around Australia remains. So we will continue to seek what the vision is for Bush Chaplaincy across remote Australia. At present we have 15 Chaplains in remote areas around Australia. However, some of these roles are stretched in terms of their geography.

During COVID some of the existing Bush Chaplain roles lost some of their non-Frontier Services funding and we were asked to step in to maintain these positions. Fortunately, we were in a position to do this. These roles will go through existing funding requests going forward.

The Board took a strategic position as COVID broke to be cautious about adding any new Bush Chaplaincy positions. The decision was to wait to understand what fundraising revenue would look like before expanding any additional positions. This position was to ensure we could fulfil our commitment to our existing positions.

Bush Chaplaincy in its current structure is also under review by the Remote Area Ministry Working Group and there is discussion to understand what is currently working and what is not. It is timely as this structure in its current form has been in operation now for almost 5 years and lots of learnings have been gained during this time. It may be after the discussions that no proposals or changes will be brought to the Assembly to consider, however given some of the complexities it is worth discussing.

A Bush Chaplains conference will be held hopefully towards the last half of 2021. We want to make sure that everyone can attend and not have borders closed.

5. NATIONAL DISASTER RECOVERY

Given the size and scope of the disaster recovery of Frontier Services and that most of our Bush Chaplains are trained and involved in disaster recovery chaplaincy we will continue to fund part of the National Disaster Recovery Chaplain's role.

At the time of writing this we are putting together a significant project for the snowy regions of NSW following on from the bushfires. We are taking a team of NRMA mechanics as one of our first group trips back after COVID lockdowns to Rockton NSW, near the Victorian border that has been devastated by fire.

There are families who have had their lives deeply impacted by these fires. One couple we are helping are still living in a makeshift shed. They lost everything including their pet Labrador and the pain still feels like it just happened yesterday. Despite these hardships, Frontier Services has been welcomed in to these "homes" and thanked for showing up, and showing that we care. Its things like this project that make us incredibly proud of what we do. There is no one else in this small town to help and yet there is so much to do. We know that we are providing hope by showing up. We realise that we will be with them for a long time in their recovery and understand that we are not the answer but just a small part of the solution.

6. RESOURCING

To make sure that our support can be provided to those in need we implemented in 2019 our Outback Angels Program. This regular monthly giving program provides a safety net that allows us to plan with confidence into the future. It provides the financial backbone for growth. In the last twelve months, we have grown the support from 350 donors to 1200 and each of those donors is giving on average \$30per month.

We are continuing to grow the number of donors who are supporting Frontier Services. We have done a number of campaigns and analysis to understand the true value of our donors. Our donors on average support us for 15 years, give 2.3 times per year and over their lifetime give just over \$15,000. Understanding how and when donors support us allows us to focus on how to acquire quality donors to support us now and into the future.

7. GOVERNANCE

Frontier Services Board Members

Rev Will Pearson, Chair	April 2016 - Present Chair June 2018 – Present	Ministry & remote
Lisa Sampson	March 2016 – Present	Fundraising, Marketing and Uniting Church involvement
Dorothy Creek	April 2016 – Present	Remote and Uniting Church involvement
Dianne Torrens	July 2013 – Present	Congress and Uniting Church Involvement
Colleen Geyer	March 2016 – Present	Assembly General Secretary
Mark Kickett	Jun 2020 – Present	Congress Support for Aunty Di Torrens
Heather Dan Houting	Aug 2020 – Present	Uniting Church Involvement and Governance
Katrina Gillies	Aug 2020 – Present	Legal
Sharon Lee	Dec 2019 – Present	IT and Data Security
Cecil Benjamin	November 2018 - Present	Finance

8. FINANCIAL

Fundraising Highlights & Issues

We are still seeing significant growth in the number of donations we are receiving as our acquisition strategies are continuing to perform. Our donations have been affected with a downturn in giving after every media storm with COVID lockdowns.

What we are noticing is the income levels across our campaigns for the last 6 months have dropped to levels that we were seeing 2 years ago. We attribute this to fear and uncertainty of the economy. As we settle into the next 6 months, we predict that optimism will return to the economic market. We are confident that our donation levels will also start to come back to the incredible levels of 2019-2020. The rationale for this optimism is that we are still growing our database in volume just not in value. Some of this also relates to the fact that this is one of the lowest levels of bequest income we have had in awhile.

We are continuing to find ways to increase our reach and in the last twelve months we have added another 30,000 contacts (leads) to our database of people who are interested but hadn't dealt with us previously.

We are on track with the volume of gifts to exceed the number of donations of last year but we are unlikely to reach the amazing income levels of the last two years due to bequests and COVID.

Financial Year	Amount	Number of donations
2017 - 2018	\$2,919,500	12,447
2018 - 2019	\$6,972,500	14,838
2019 – 2020	\$6,121,800	19,238
2020 - 2021 (until Jan)	\$ 1,977,000	11,817

Showing the growth in the number of gifts but also revenue. Figures in the above table show the numbers of donors and value up until Jan 21 so we are confident we will exceed the numbers of donors giving this financial year but maybe not the value.

Income for the end of January is \$1,977,000 against a budget of \$2,090,000 we are about \$113,000 behind in income against budget. Our expenditure is \$1,889,000 against a budget of \$2,255,000 which is a saving of \$367,000. Our net revenue is ahead by about \$250K against budget.

9. **ADVOCACY**

We recently completed a media piece around the issues of the ongoing drought as we had several farmers whose mental health had been significantly impacted with the added stress of COVID. As farmers they were witnessing support flowing to other struggling small businesses when they had been waiting over 12 months for promised funding that still hadn't been delivered.

This media strategy and survey lead to an invitation to the National Drought and Flood Response and Recovery Agency, The Hon Shane Stone is the Coordinator General who reports directly to the Prime Minister and is responsible for the agency. The results of that meeting was that the agency is keen to work with us regarding practical support on the ground and recovery efforts.

Anecdotally and the research we are hearing about is the declining mental health and increased domestic violence in regional and remote Australia. Frightening statistics are at twice the numbers of metropolitan areas and these communities are without the access to support networks that others simply take for granted.

Our team has done an amazing job recently with the advocacy position for the drought. The media played an important role in our advocacy around drought funding and has gotten us a seat at the table with the drought agency. The impacts of this are substantial. Michelle McLeod, our National Program Manager is now working incredibly hard to create a lasting partnership between Frontier Services and the drought agency

We have been given a commitment that if we become aware of any significant case studies we can put them forward unfiltered to the politicians that can make decisions, inclusive of the Prime Minister.

In addition our Bush Chaplains are now being invited to community forum events and Frontier Services material is being handed out to the community as a resource.

We are currently working on our next campaign which we think is going to be the mice plague in NSW. The current issue is government have been slow at declaring it a plague and as such funding and resources are not available. The stories are heartbreaking given that these

communities have been in the worst drought conditions in Australian recorded history, one good season of rain and crop and it's all been eaten or destroyed. The town is in financial devastation as no one wants to eat or spend time there because of the smell and significant health concerns that come along with this kind of natural disaster.

10. JOHN FLYNN FOUNDATION

Since the last Triennial Assembly, the John Flynn Foundation is now a reporting entity wholly owned by Frontier Services. The Assembly had asked Frontier Services to bring this in line with church oversight, which has been achieved. This took some time with a change in trustees and constitution but this work is now completed. Currently the John Flynn Foundation has more than \$4mill in assets on their balance sheet and Frontier Services is providing the management and fundraising expertise.

11. OUTBACK LINKS

Since the last Triennial Assembly, we have more than doubled the number of volunteers in this program. It has currently been constrained due to COVID as sending people across borders has not been possible. People in remote Australia can request any type of volunteer, highly skilled or low skilled for a period of time. This is extraordinarily complex at the best of times as the job descriptions we receive are so varied: hospice nursing, disability bathroom designers, trades of all types, horticulture, teachers, architects, farm hands, there are many random and varied roles. Some are easier to fill than others. This program however is continuing to deliver very powerful outcomes for individuals and communities.

12. REDRESS

Frontier Services joined the National Redress Scheme in 2019. The National Redress Scheme provides acknowledgement and support to people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. As of March 2021, one Redress Claim has been accepted, and one civil claim has been received.

Frontier Services staff will be participating in training with Sarah Lim, National Director of UCA Redress.

13. COVID 19 IMPACTS

COVID-19 is reshaping how we do what we do. We have from a human resources perspective been changing and reviewing constantly where we work from (home vs office) on a regular basis based on the comfort level of the team.

We have enjoyed an even greater connection with some of the Bush Chaplains. We have held numerous teleconferences with them and most of them are engaging with us now on Workplace.

Our fundraising growth has been hampered by COVID-19.

Our donors are consistently responding to negative media reports relating to COVID-19 and this is the first time we have seen a decrease in giving in the last 3 years. We have lost corporate partnerships, the biggest loss being our alliance with Qantas. We have had congregations who have been active supporters not meeting and have experienced a huge loss in not being able to hold our annual fundraising event, The Great Outback BBQ.

Our ability to collect marketing material and footage has been affected by not being able to travel which in turn has impacted directly on our fundraising appeals. Integrated communications are a critical piece in the success of our fundraising strategies. As a side impact of this lack of footage it is also impacting our ability for story telling on our other mainstream media and communications channels.

We have had significant savings from less travel but some of this saving has been taken up by increased requirements for more IT and telecommunications support for the team working remotely.

COVID has also forced us to think differently about how to raise money. So, our Great Outback BBQ will have a virtual component for 2021.

Volunteering demand has not slowed but the complexity of filling the roles has increased and our numbers this year could possibly exceed what we were able to achieve last year just due to the incredible demand. We have already completed more than 14,000 hours even without large projects, and with border closures. We have an incredible Outback Links team working very hard to find ways to meet the needs differently while still showing up.

14. CHALLENGES AHEAD

Our biggest challenges are financial difficulties due to COVID and the rapidly changing environment we are currently in. The challenge of running a specialised lean fundraising team, in a fast paced environment is that as soon as you remove one person from the team, it is felt by the whole team. It is a constant, and very complex issue.

Jannine Jackson
National Director

Rev Will Pearson
Chair