

FEBRUARY 2019

FrontierNews

Standing with people
in the bush



**Frontier
Services**
Standing with
people in the bush



From the Director

A message from Jannine

Starting the new year with a smile

A happy new year to you all. I must say what a wonderful start to the year it has been following on from your incredible generosity and support. As we finished off 2018, I was so touched and moved by the support and coming together of such amazing people who want to make it better for those living in remote Australia. We had a paper storm of Christmas cards, showing love, support and words of encouragement for our Bush Chaplains over Christmas which was simply beautiful – we took photos and shared them all with our Bush Chaplains. We also received several donations in response to our Christmas Campaign of which I am truly grateful. Thank you for your continued support, we couldn't do what we do without you.

Coming off the back of our Great Outback BBQ Campaign (that ran through the month of September), we still received gifts right up until Christmas. We exceeded our initial expectations, allowing us to send more helping hands to our farmers in need – Read more about the Great Outback BBQ success on Page 16.

"I am truly touched by your love and support for our Bush Chaplains and the people doing it tough in Outback Australia"



A big thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and spirit to be part of the restoration of the John Flynn Memorial Church in Alice Springs last year. You can view our beautiful video from this trip at [**www.youtube.com/FrontierServices**](http://www.youtube.com/FrontierServices)

We're hoping that you might share this video so that more people can volunteer and lend a hand out bush. This trip has ensured the survival of two important buildings as well as injecting some heart back into the community.

Jannine Jackson
National Director

The restoration team at John Flynn Memorial Church



Help us grow our Outback Links volunteering program

- View our new volunteering video on our YouTube (www.youtube.com/FrontierServices) or Facebook (www.facebook.com/FrontierServices) pages and spread the word by sharing it with your networks
- **Volunteer** – sign up and lend a hand at www.frontierservices.org



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Front Cover Farmer Glen and Rev Phill Matthews, Carinda

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About Frontier Services Frontier Services is a national agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, established to continue the unified work of the Australian Inland Mission, the Methodist Inland Mission, and the inland mission of the Congregational Union, and works with people across 85% of the continent, including Aboriginal communities and isolated properties.



Caring for the Career

Restoration, care and support for our Bush Chaplains

Last year National Director, Jannine Jackson travelled to South Australia to attend the 2018 Bush Chaplain Conference. The purpose of the conference was to bring together our wonderful Bush Chaplains, allowing them to share their stories and learnings, take time to restore, and provide them resources and support.

As the frontline of Frontier Services, Bush Chaplains are often in the middle of complex and challenging circumstances. As the friend and listening ear, they are privy to some difficult and confronting situations, so it's important for our team to come together and connect. With the nature of their role, planning time for respite is vital to maintaining good personal mental health.

With the mental health landscape continuing to evolve, and the disparity between metro and remote living growing, additional training was needed in and around the prevalence of mental health out bush.

Each day started with a beautiful sermon and reflection, giving everyone the ability to understand just how unique and



Rev David Ellis and his wife, Janette, speaking with Rev Phill Matthews (left) and Stephen Robinson

personalised each of their ministries are. They also had a special visit from Rev Stephen Robinson, Assembly's National Disaster Recovery Officer, who spoke about compassion fatigue and responding and caring for those in disaster.

In reflecting this experience, Jannine shared, "I have developed a deeper level of understanding and appreciation for the role of our Bush Chaplains after sitting and speaking with them. I always come away moved and in awe of the unselfish sacrifices they make to serve their communities, as part of God's calling. I'm so grateful for their commitment."

We wanted to add a special thank you to Rev Ashley Davis of the South Australian Presbytery, as well as the Frontier Services South Australian Adult Fellowship who provided gifts and the funds which allowed this session to go ahead. Thanks to you, we have been able to strengthen our relationships with our Bush Chaplains more and understand how to better help and support them in their jobs.



You can help support the growth in Bush Chaplaincy with a small gift. Every year, we must raise on average \$120,000 for each of our Bush Chaplains to keep them on the road. Give a gift today and help our Bush Chaplains to reach more people in isolation.



People making a difference in Western Australia

We recently caught up with our Murchison Bush Chaplain, Rev Mitch Fialkowski who shared some wonderful interviews he carried out with the people of his community.



When you're out bush, community is vitally important. Here, we're sharing a short interview with Owen, who previously worked for Frontier Services, and still works in a vast area of the Western Desert, empowering people with the skills they need to support themselves and their families.

"It's wonderful to see the people I worked with while at Frontier Services. They have jobs, homes and families."

Owen

Owen is based in *Jigalong*. He and his wife have been working in the Port Headland area for about 8 years and have no plans to move any time soon.

His outback work began years ago with Frontier Services who provided training in aboriginal cultural awareness and the differences that occur between tribes. *"It's quite a multi-cultural area with each tribe speaking a different dialogue."* Owen has learnt to speak the basic language but he describes his language skills as *"a work in progress!"*

Today, Owen's responsibilities are varied and wide ranging. He helps manage a variety of programs such as:

- The Community Development Program which provides vital training and qualifications to access employment in the mines. Gaining these skills means residents can have careers while still remaining on country.
- The Women's Centre where Owen obtained assistance from a qualified tailor to teach the local women how to make and mend clothes. This gives them employment opportunities as well as practical skills. The Centre also teaches painting and runs cooking classes so the women can learn how to cook bush tucker and make nutritious meals for their family.

- He also coordinates a mental health program as well as aged care and home and community care services.

To de-stress, Owen joins the men as they go hunting for kangaroo or he will sit around a fire with families, just *"having a yarn and making bush tucker"*. It's this ability to have casual conversations and provide practical help that is central to Owen's role in his community. These are all attributes that are so important to the work of all Frontier Services' Bush Chaplains.

Having worked in the area for about 8 years, Owen says, *"It's so wonderful to see that the people I met while at Frontier Services are still doing well. They have jobs and careers, they have married and started their own families. All this has happened while remaining in country. They have laid solid foundations for their life. It's such a good thing to see."*

For more than 106 years, we have been providing people in remote Australia with practical, on-the-ground assistance as well as pastoral and spiritual care when needed. This work continues today because of your support. With others like Owen working on the ground, this gives Bush Chaplains like Rev Mitch a chance to travel further to help those without any access to support and care.



Travelling with a purpose

Australians are renowned for their volunteering efforts. In fact many essential services rely on a volunteer workforce.

It's certainly the case for our Outback Links Program. Much of our work is performed by volunteers. They come from all walks of life, age groups and cultures. But they all have one thing in common, caring for people of the Outback.

Seeing parts of Australia most people miss

Retirees Colin and Sue Watt from the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria say they weren't ready to retire. While they were keen to spend 6 months of the year travelling around Australia, they also wanted to do something "worthwhile". So they became Outback Links volunteers.

They plan their trips around their Outback Links placements. As Sue says, "You need to be a little flexible in where you go and how you spend your time but we have visited the most amazing places – parts of Australia that other people would never dream of visiting."

Recently Sue and Colin spent 3 weeks supporting a family located at Westmar, Queensland. It's about 5 hours west of Brisbane by car.

Farmers Hayley and John Maudsley wanted to attend an important family wedding. But taking three young children interstate and disrupting their schooling wasn't practical. In addition, Hayley required surgery that was booked for after the wedding, while John would be busy working long days on seeding before the rains came.

Sue and Colin had planned to travel to Queensland so volunteered their time to take care of the children and give John and Hayley the opportunity to go to the wedding. Then they stayed around to take care of the kids while Hayley was in hospital and for several days after her return home. This meant John was able to do the seeding and Hayley had some quiet time to simply focus on her recovery – both knowing the kids were being taken care of.



“We get so much out of it!”

Sue and Colin are enthusiastic supporters of the Outback Links Program. They've already been volunteers for two years and plan to continue for at least another three. They love the way they can combine their love of travel with being of service.

When asked if volunteers need special skills, Colin replied, “You just need to be able to talk to people and have empathy for their situation. Really, the most important thing is being there for them.”

Both Sue and Colin enjoy experiencing Outback life, knowing they are being of service to others.

“It’s a very worthwhile thing to do and we meet such lovely, interesting people. We’d encourage anyone to become a volunteer. Or if that’s not possible, support Outback Links with a gift.”

“It’s also important that people in the Outback avail themselves of this service”, added Sue.



**You can volunteer
with Outback Links.**

**Visit
www.frontierservices.org**



"I know my actions have contributed to something that's really important and something that I value."

Rachel Morgan, first-time volunteer with Frontier Services Outback Links Program.

Volunteering for the first time

The John Flynn Memorial Church is located in the heart of Alice Springs. The building is more than a memorial to his work. It's an active church that doubles as a meeting place for people of diverse cultural backgrounds – just as John Flynn had intended.

But after 63 years, the Church needed some love and significant repairs. So Frontier Services asked for volunteers to spend one week repairing the beautiful, old church.

Long-time financial supporter, Rachel Morgan, learned about the restoration project in Frontier News. Like many, Rachel has great admiration for the work and life of John Flynn. Although she works full-time, she decided to use one week's annual leave to help restore the beautiful John Flynn Memorial Uniting Church.

A team of strangers sharing a unique experience

It was Rachel's first experience as a Frontier Services volunteer and she describes it as *"Amazing! We were a group of strangers who came together for the same reason; sharing the same ideals and passion."*

Rachel doesn't have much experience with DIY or renovations. In fact, she had no idea how to use an electric sander. But she is a very willing student. She quickly got the hang of it as her task was to help strip, prime and paint all the church's windows.

As Rachel explains, *"There were jobs for everyone covering all skill levels and abilities."*

The restoration work was keenly watched by locals which gave volunteers the opportunity to chat with them. *"It was surprising*



Rachel and another of our volunteers, Keith Castle sanding ahead of a paint job.



to see how much interest the locals had in what we were doing. They weren't necessarily members of the congregation but they really appreciated the efforts a group of strangers were making to help preserve and improve the Church's facilities."

When asked if she would consider volunteering again, Rachel's response was a definite "Yes!" She went on to explain that while she is not a particularly religious person, she feels a strong need to be of service to others by providing a helping hand.

"Giving your time to assist others is a wonderful feeling. I found the whole experience very moving. By volunteering my time for just one week, I was able to do something that benefits a whole community. How amazing is that?"

"There are no special skills required - just a willingness to muck in and try something new.



I am so grateful for the opportunity to share a goal with like-minded strangers. It was such a gift and I am so glad I made the time to volunteer."

Lending a helping hand for people in the bush

Outback Links volunteers come together to provide practical assistance to people living in remote communities. Their backgrounds and skill sets are diverse but they all share a common goal – to make a difference by giving their time to help others.

It's a truly unique experience. For more information about volunteering with us, visit www.frontierservices.org or call us on 1300 787 247.

Living out our faith through volunteering

Tony and Annette Winter share their volunteering journey.

On completing his theological studies at Leigh College in 1963, Rev Tony Winter was appointed to Tamworth Methodist Circuit in NSW as a probationary minister. From there he went to Corowa NSW on the Victorian border. His predecessor in Corowa was Rev David Manton, who was leaving to serve as a Federal Methodist Inland Mission Patrol Padre at Alice Springs. As a young boy, Tony had been drawn to the work of John Flynn and tells how he used to save his threepences to fill a mission card which would help fund the important work in the Outback, "beyond the furthest fence". A young boy's dream of serving in Alice Springs was firmly fixed in Tony's mind and as minister in Corowa, he began his plan to follow David Manton into Alice Springs. However, God had other plans, and Tony was sent to Port Hedland in the Pilbara in the far north west of Western Australia.

Tony's parish was about a third the size of Victoria and his work in the Pilbara Remote Area involved serving the needs of the residents of

Port Hedland – including the many mine workers at the port, and at Mt Newman and Goldsworthy and Shay Gap, and including Marble Bar and Nullagine, as well as the pastoralists and graziers across the Pilbara Region of the far north west.

Aside from all his pastoral care of people, Tony was ever reaching out in mission to the communities in which he served and travelled and has been inspired by God to find many ways of connecting with community in uniquely different ways.

Tony, and wife of six years Annette, have enjoyed travelling to many congregations, as volunteers for Frontier Services, spreading the word of this very valuable service. Some presentations are two-day events, where a barbeque or dinner is followed by worship the following day. They have travelled together to the congregations of Manilla, Barraba, Forster, Taree, Gloucester, South West Rocks, Tamworth Southside and West Tamworth. A regular comment from people is that it's always great to listen to "someone who's actually been there".

Continued over...



Tony and Annette thoroughly enjoy volunteering and have been to Alice Springs as part of the work party refurbishing the John Flynn Memorial Church. They said it was such a privilege to be part of this team as they worked in many different capacities with new valued friendships formed. One of the workers from Wyong has already booked Tony for a Frontier Services presentation in his congregation in March 2019.

There were many significant moments during the Alice Springs trip, one of which being the visit on the final day to St Phillips College. Tony had hoped to see the Fred McKay museum.

When Tony was working as a Bush Chaplain in Port Hedland, he would often have a visit from Rev Fred McKay, who took over the leadership of the Australian Inland Mission from Rev John Flynn. Fred used to say to Tony, "Come on, let's drive out into the bush and boil the billy, and have a yarn."

So, to see the museum would bring back many fond memories. They pulled up for a look at the buildings and suddenly the Deputy Head of the college, Tony Nott came and introduced himself and his wife, Emily (who is



granddaughter to Fred McKay). Tony and Annette were treated to a personal tour of the museum, including the chapel and the Peace Garden where the ashes of Fred McKay and his wife Margaret lay. For the Winters, so many moments of chance happened and made the trip just that little bit “extra special”.

After Alice Springs, and having been home just one week, they travelled out to Carinda, some 400km away to volunteer with Outback Links. This was a wonderful experience helping people in so many different ways. Tony and Annette did many things ranging from cleaning windows, feeding sheep and cattle, a little fencing, and generally chatted to people who can often feel quite isolated. The last day was spent helping a young family who had volunteered their place for a Great Outback BBQ. The evening was a great time of fellowship with the eight NRMA volunteers and farmers from all around the district.

Following Carinda, Annette arranged a cake stall in aid of Frontier Services at Bunnings, and \$911.00 was raised for Frontier Services.



It was more than a cake stall though, as Tony was kept busy chatting to people and telling the story of the good work of Frontier Services and encouraging folk to volunteer with Outback Links. The \$20 note was shown to so many people. They like to think that now, quite a few more people know of the great work being carried out by Frontier Services and the Outback Links program.



Thank you for a great barbecue season

"When the opportunity to take on the role of 'Chief Snag Sizzler' for the Great Outback BBQ was passed on to me, I had no idea what I was in for."

There were photos and stories from previous years, and I knew we needed to raise a significant amount of money to help our drought-affected farmers, but I had no idea how serious Aussies were about their barbecues!





We launched the 2018 Great Outback BBQ in May and within four months we had over 220 registrations from hosts eager to hold a barbecue in support of our farmers. When barbecue season hit in September, I was amazed by the incredible community spirit and dedication everyone put towards supporting those who need us.

Friends, families, congregations and community groups came together. Everyone had fun and most importantly, you made a real difference to Aussie farmers doing it tough in the Outback.

This year, you raised an incredible \$187,000 making this Great Outback BBQ season the biggest in Frontier Services' history! This would not have been possible without you – thank you.

So why does this matter? By supporting the Great Outback BBQ, you have:

- **Provided essential support for our farmers in crisis**
- **Ensured families on isolated properties can get a helping hand when they need it**
- **Supported our Bush Chaplains as they provide practical and pastoral care to people and communities in remote Australia**

Thanks again to everyone who participated. You have given our farmers a much-needed hand up and demonstrated what mateship is all about.

See you all again in September for another fantastic Great Outback BBQ season!

*Kat Piper
Executive Assistant &
Project Manager*

**Congratulations
to our top overall
fundraiser, St Stephens
Uniting Church
Williamstown!**

**Also, congratulations to
Hilary T from Queensland
who won our lucky
prize draw!**



Providing for the long term needs of isolated communities

We recently spoke with Rev Gregor Henderson, Chair of Trustees of the John Flynn Foundation, about his passion for remote area ministry. He strongly believes in the role the Uniting Church and our Bush Chaplains have in fulfilling the needs of people in the Outback.

Gregor admires the resilience and resourcefulness of country folk but stressed that the sense of isolation for them is very real. He added, whilst our communication technologies have improved, there is still a lack of human contact.

"We're one of the most urbanised countries in the world, so people in remote areas can feel very left out," he said. "For them, having a Bush Chaplain they can call on, or who drops by to visit every few months, provides a vital connection."

"They're not only connected to the Bush Chaplain, but the chaplain's networks too, like Outback Links. It lets them know that people do care."

A very giving ministry

Gregor began working with Bush Chaplains in 1974, when he was appointed to the Board of the Australian Inland Mission. He is still awed by their capacity to give.

"I have great admiration for those who take on this calling. It's not a role most people could fulfil," he said. "To be a Bush Chaplain, one needs to be self-sustaining and have a great deal of self-belief. After forty-plus years, I still see these same qualities in today's chaplains."

"They have to give every day, despite working in isolation themselves. They deserve our support."





“Supporting remote area ministry has been in my blood for more than 40 years. Bush Chaplains play a vital role in the lives of people in the Outback – as friends, counsellors, advocates, first-responders and bearers of God’s love in word and deed.”

*Bush Chaplain Rev Phill Matthews
with farmer Glen in Carinda, NSW*



Leaving a lasting legacy

The John Flynn Foundation is the endowment fund of Frontier Services. Gifts are held in perpetuity and an annual income is disbursed towards supporting our Bush Chaplains.

During our conversation with Gregor, we also talked about his wishes to leave a bequest in his Will to the John Flynn Foundation, and having that important conversation with family.

“Australians are living longer than ever compared to thirty or forty years ago,” Gregor said. “What this means is that our own children - the next generation - may already be fairly established before their parents pass on.”

“I think it’s important to have that conversation with our families so we know what their needs are, and understand what balance in our Will can be left for charitable purposes.”

“I feel passionately about remote area ministry and providing for the long term needs of isolated communities. My family understands – and is supportive – of my wish to leave a bequest to the Foundation.”

The need is still great

Reflecting on the past four decades, Gregor believes that whilst some things have changed in the Outback – namely the way we communicate – the distance and the needs are still the same.

“There is no substitute for the face-to-face conversations you can have leaning on a fence or over a cup of tea. That personal contact is so invaluable for people in remote Australia.”

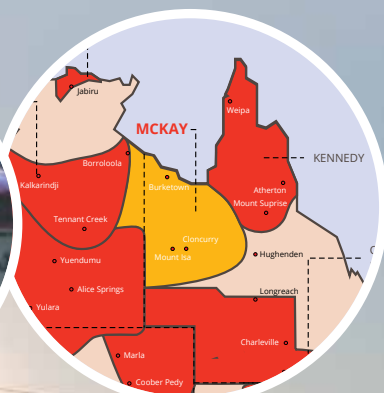
If you would like more information about leaving a bequest in your Will, please call us on **1300 787 247** and ask to speak with our Donor Relations Officer.

Flying hope to people in north west Queensland

The McKay Remote Area has a long history of Bush Chaplains. Named after Reverends Fred and Les McKay, who served in the region during the early-to-mid-1900s, the region spans 625,000km² - nearly three times the state of Victoria. Today, Rev David Ellis and his wife Janette carry on the tradition of serving this vast area by plane and 4WD.

We recently spoke with David about his ministry. He told us that Bush Chaplaincy has been the only continuous service in the region for the past one hundred years, and how in that time, other essential services have withdrawn from the Outback.

Based in Cloncurry, the birthplace of the Royal Flying Doctors Service, he and Janette bring hope, comfort, connection and encouragement to people living in isolation.



Bringing hope and comfort to families

Going to school might seem pretty normal for children who live near big cities and towns. But in the Outback, many undertake their education through virtual classrooms with the School of the Air. The School helps break down the isolation that children experience by bringing together remote families and developing a strong sense of community¹.

You may have heard of the tragedy that struck this community last year; of the death of a young teenager named Dolly, who took her own life after suffering repeated bullying at boarding school². Working with the Mt Isa School of the Air, David and Janette provided pastoral care to these families. Sitting with them around meal tables and at mini-schools, they listened to their concerns and fears.

"We are conscious of the distance and isolation families feel as their older children head away for education beyond Year 6," David said. "They worry about being apart for extended periods and no longer being able to share in family life."

"So we offer ideas for how to stay connected using social media and other technology. And we work with the School of the Air to address the transition to school life away from home."

Connecting with people in isolation and offering encouragement

Most stations in the McKay Remote Area are battling through their seventh or eighth year of drought. Visiting these farmers, David spoke of their stoicism and resourcefulness.

"We occasionally feel their sense of despair," David said. "But these hardened people of the bush are simply resolute. They keep on keeping on, and talk more about what they could be doing if it rained or how they'll do better next time the cycle hits dry again."

David told us how grateful he is for the generosity of individuals and congregations, who make it possible for him to connect with people in isolation by providing the fuel for both plane and 4WD.

"Because of the support we receive, we can visit people on remote stations and provide that listening ear. It also gives us the means to help with overdue power bills, give kids the chance to attend school camps or assist with access to medical services."

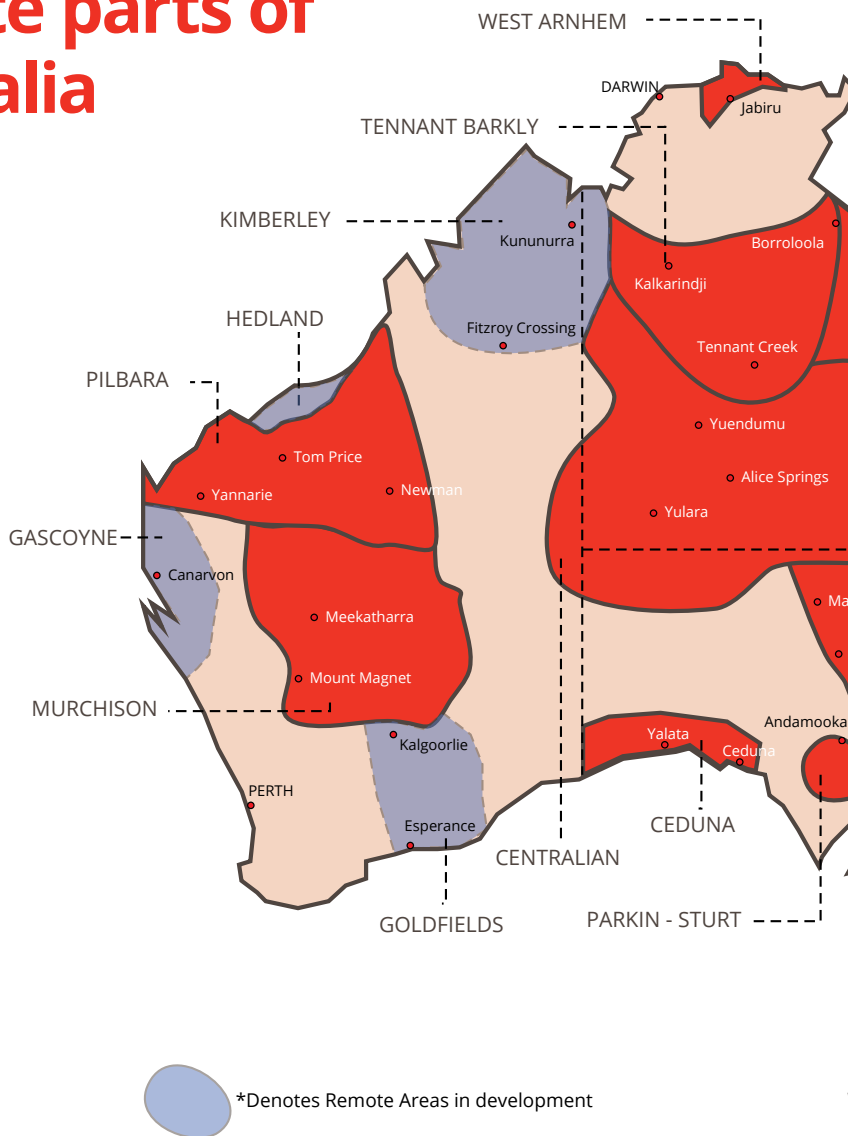
"This face-to-face contact and practical care give people encouragement – it lets them know they're not alone."

As essential services withdraw from the Outback, the need for our Bush Chaplains continues to grow. We are grateful that David and Janette are on the frontline providing care when it is needed.

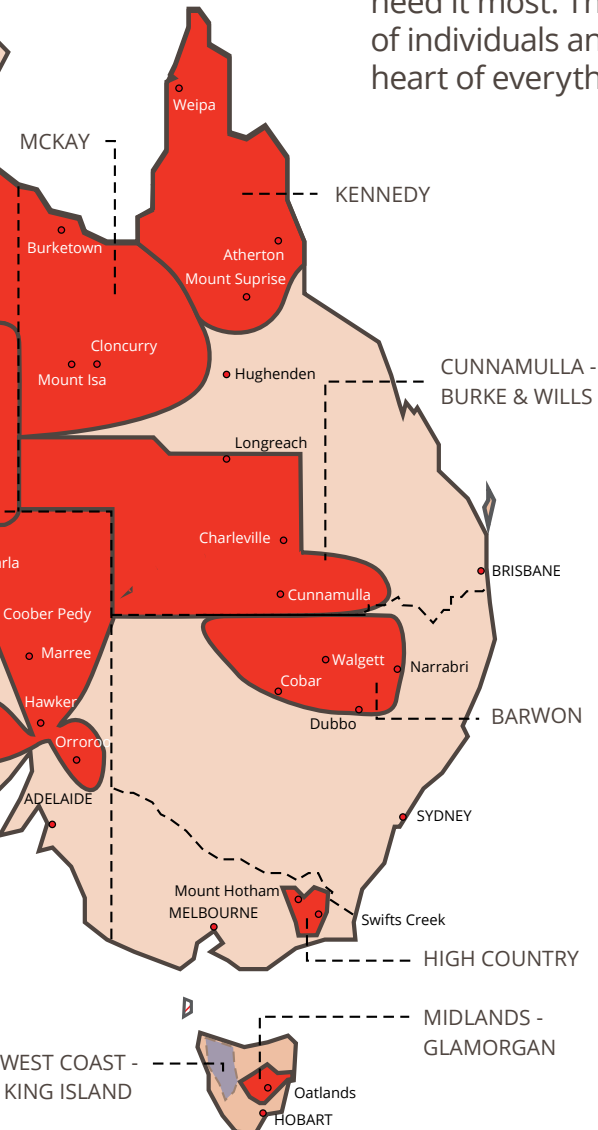
¹ <https://mtisasde.eq.edu.au> [Accessed online 17 January 2019]

² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-12/dolly-everett-memorial-in-katherine/9323118> [Accessed online 14 January 2019]

Bringing practical and pastoral care to the most remote parts of Australia



Our amazing Bush Chaplains are friends to lean on when people in isolation and hardship need it most. The mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities sit at the very heart of everything they do.



Together, we:

- Provide advocacy for those without a voice - making connections with government agencies and helping families dealing with domestic violence or suicide;
- Work with First Peoples to bring hope, foster collaboration with Second Peoples and create brighter futures for Aboriginal and Islander youth;
- Arrange food parcels, emergency accommodation and provide practical care for those in need;
- Roll up our sleeves to give a helping hand wherever it's needed.

To keep just one Bush Chaplain on the road each year, on average we need to raise \$120,000. This provides them with a safe vehicle, fuel, rent and a basic salary. Your gift today will support our Bush Chaplains as they continue providing practical, pastoral and spiritual care to people in the most remote parts of Australia.

**“My hope is that I can be there to
build community where we meet,
for the good times and the bad times.
That’s what mateship’s all about.”**

Rev Phill Matthews, Barwon Remote Area



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