

NOVEMBER 2020

FrontierNews

Facing the
future
together



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



A message from Jannine

Looking forward to a better road ahead.

As I'm reflecting on all that we've experienced throughout 2020, this has been a particularly tough year, not just for Frontier Services but for our entire nation. And in remote Australia, the effects of what we've all experienced have been felt even more keenly.

We heard stories of farmers having to move their children to new schools because of border closures, children living in remote areas losing out on what little socialisation they have and farmers struggling to sell produce and livestock because of closures in international markets and in some cases even closures of domestic processing.

Through it all, I've been blown away by the generosity in our communities. Once we were able to begin sending Outback Links volunteers out to farmers again, we were surprised and delighted with offers of assistance. And while we found that our volunteers have been incredibly generous with their offers of assistance, doing our role has become increasingly complex.



In this issue you'll read about one of our most recent projects, led by our Parkin Sturt Remote Area Bush Chaplain, Sunny. You'll also find out more about how our Bush Chaplains have adapted their ministries to continue to serve remote communities through the pandemic.

There's no doubt that people living in Remote Australia have been hit with an incredibly tough year. Facing the onslaught of natural disasters and then trying to recover in the midst of a pandemic, it's been far from easy. But I'm praying that 2021 brings with it a sense of optimism and hope. And at Frontier Services we'll continue to work hard to provide vital support for people in the Outback.

Jannine Jackson
National Director



Support vital services in the bush

- **Register to host your Great Outback BBQ** and show your support for people in remote Australia, including our Aussie farmers. Visit greatoutbackbbq.com.au. Check out pages 18-19 for more info.
- Give the gift that gives twice. Go to pages 20-23 for this year's Christmas Cards and Gift of Hope cards. Get in early to avoid disappointment!
- If you know someone who might be interested in **volunteering** with us and having the experience of a lifetime, please visit frontierservices.org/volunteer



Published by
Frontier Services
PO Box 3424
Parramatta NSW 2124

Suite 53 / 2 O'Connell St
Parramatta NSW 2150

T 1300 787 247
E enquiries@frontierservices.org
W www.frontierservices.org

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Editor Zoe Victoria
Contributors Cain Hartigan
Photographer Darren Clements
Front Cover Frontier Services National Program Manager, Michelle and farmer Kevin Murphy



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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.

Chaplaincy in the midst of coronavirus

Quarantine, isolation and border controls throughout this year have had an enormous impact on the work of our Frontier Services Bush Chaplains. But they've continued to find ways to reach out and connect with communities across Remote Australia. We chatted to Benjamin Quilliam and Peter Wait who work in the Centralian and Tennant Barkly regions of the Northern Territory about what's changed in 2020.

Can you tell us a little bit about what being a Bush Chaplain in your Remote Area involves?

Benjamin Quilliam, Centralian Remote Area: It means that I'm always busy. I don't think I've yet had a normal year as a Bush Chaplain. There's always some big project going on that takes up my time. In recent years I've been involved in trauma healing workshops and church restoration projects. And each year when The School of the Air hosts their home tutors conference I run a creche to look after the young children who come along with their parents. In previous years, my job has also been filled with travel. A lot of my pastoral work usually involves going out bush to visit people. But because of border closures and biosecurity zones that have been implemented during the pandemic, I haven't been able to do that as much. Just last week I went down to Yulara for the first time since coronavirus to check on how people there were doing. Normally I'd be making those visits more regularly.

Peter Wait, Tennant Barkly Remote Area: There's no such thing as a normal day in the job that I do. I've been working as the Bush Chaplain here in Tennant Barkly for seven years now. Tennant Creek is a town of just 3000



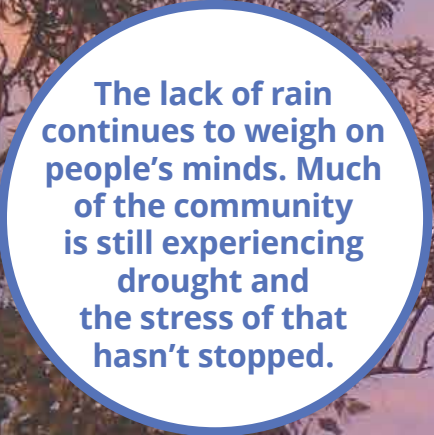
people. My job is really to support the community in whatever way I can. Just this morning I had a chat with three different people. That's a big part of my job, just being here to listen when people in the community need to feel heard. Within the community here in Tennant Creek I'm also heavily involved with the community op shop. We had to close temporarily during lockdown but now we're back up and running. Recently, I've also been able to get back out on the road after coronavirus restrictions were eased. I made some good contacts while I was visiting both Katherine and Darwin. I'm hoping to build on those contacts in future. A lot of the job is touching base with people in that way and making sure that they

know that I'm here to support them or connect them with other services that can assist them.

What did you have to change about your Bush Chaplaincy to adapt to coronavirus restrictions this year?

Benjamin Quilliam: I've pretty much transformed myself into a technical support officer. We've been wanting to find a way to put the Alice Springs church services online for a while and when people's movement was restricted it gave us the perfect opportunity to do that. I bought some streaming gear, a laptop and a camera to be able to set us up online. My congregation and Rev. Peter Wait's congregation in Tennant Barkly came together to attend those online church services. But we wanted to make sure that people still got to connect with each other in isolation rather than just attending a church service. So we also began a weekly Zoom catchup to allow the congregations to have an informal chat after the service.

In addition to that, I've been providing support to various organisations in the area to help them transition online too. I've been making videos and resources to help the Central Land Management Association to move onto Zoom. And we had planned to livestream the



The lack of rain continues to weigh on people's minds. Much of the community is still experiencing drought and the stress of that hasn't stopped.

Harts Range Races but thankfully we ended up being able to have the event after restrictions were eased.

Restrictions also meant changes to events like funerals. There was quite a large backlog of funerals in Aboriginal communities across the area because of the need to transport bodies back to country to conduct sorry business. In some instances we've also been able to support those communities in live streaming funerals so that family members could be involved in the ceremonies despite border closures.

Peter Wait: In April our churches were shut as a precaution during the coronavirus pandemic and biosecurity zones were implemented which meant that I couldn't leave Tennant Creek. My congregation here linked up with the Alice Springs congregation to have church services. Thankfully our biosecurity zones were lifted on the 24th of May and we were able to resume worship in person. Since then I've been able to get back on the road. Over June and July I went on four different trips. Because tourism has dropped off significantly with the ban on international travel, the roads have been unusually empty. The surprising result is that I've had some delightful conversations with the locals. I'm

hoping to continue doing more of that.

How did your community respond to the challenges of 2020?

Benjamin Quilliam: The people here have faced all sorts of challenges this year. The lack of rain continues to weigh on people's minds. Much of the community is still experiencing drought and the stress of that hasn't stopped.

The tourism industry in Yulara has also been hit hard by the pandemic with two thirds of the staff there being let off because of lack of work. And smaller tour operators are also feeling the pinch because there's no income and they don't have the option of shutting down and waiting it out until the end of the pandemic. Most of us have also experienced the practical challenges of supermarket shortages.

Stress levels in the community have been quite high. Particularly for families whose children are completing their schooling interstate or away from home. The changes in border restrictions and the fear and uncertainty has really affected lots of people.


Peter Wait: The biggest change in the community here has been the noticeable lack of tourists. For example,

when I was recently in Darwin every second sink in the caravan park had been disabled to make sure that people were following physical distancing rules. So in that way, people have experienced some modifications to their everyday lives but we are attempting to function as "normal".

In the early days of restrictions we experienced a shortage of food and supplies but for us that's been an ongoing issue after the local supermarket burned down. The community has had access to a pop-up supermarket and we briefly experienced some issues with our supply chains due to the border closures and travel restrictions. But it never got as bad as in some places where there were runs on toilet paper and other essential items.

How did you stay connected with other clergy so that you could continue to support your community?

Benjamin Quilliam: It's been really interesting to think about what we can learn from this year about how to be better Bush Chaplains. In the early weeks of the pandemic I was connecting with Rev. Peter Wait once a week to support each other.



"No matter how terrible the world seems I remember that when I get up in the morning the dog will still want to get walked."

And having our congregations join together was really helpful for the both of us. But I think it's also important to remember that this year has given us all an opportunity to think about what we can change and what we can do better. I'm looking forward to being able to catch up with the other Bush Chaplains and see what we can do going forward.

Peter Wait: I've been involved in meetings where the leaders and representatives of different denominations meet to discuss how

we can best work together in the community. Normally we meet for a coffee and a chat but when the restrictions were brought in we had to change how we were meeting. We share information so that we can find ways to provide pastoral care in a compassionate and understanding way.

What are your hopes for the community heading into 2021?

Benjamin Quilliam: I'm definitely hoping to have the opportunity to

get back on the road again and visit people because I've missed doing that. I also want to touch base with some of the tourist towns and roadhouses and offer some practical support. I want to be able to show the community that as a Bush Chaplain I recognise how difficult this year has been for lots of people. And that there are still people who care about them and want to be involved in recovering from such a massive loss for them.

Peter Wait: Life is always uncertain and we will all hang in there and get through it. There's still lots of joy in the world. Just last week I had a cup of tea with a couple that I married earlier this year and soon I'll be officiating another wedding. So I still have things to celebrate and look forward to. And in the end, no matter how terrible the world seems I remember that when I get up in the morning the dog will still want to get walked.

Making do with what you have

Donna's family faced three years of drought before rain earlier this year brought temporary relief. But Donna knows that another dry season is inevitable. Frontier Services headed out to her property in far-western NSW earlier this year to find out how she and her family are coping.



We visited Donna (taking all the necessary precautions) in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. She and her husband John live with their two children Phoebe and Thomas on a 23,000 acre property in New South Wales. On such a large property, they are no strangers to isolation. But the pandemic has still left a mark on their lives. "It's been a very, very worrying time" she told us.

But the pandemic is just the latest in a long list of worries for families like theirs. The family only runs Merino sheep on the station. "We were getting our sheep numbers up quite high so we had quite a good income," she told us, "but the drought certainly took care of that."

The impact of three long years of drought on their livestock has been enormous. "Probably about 1000 ewes died. We didn't have lambing for three seasons," said Donna. They were forced to buy fodder for the surviving livestock. But the expense of having to buy feed meant that they had to sell off all their cattle in 2019. "We just couldn't do it anymore financially," Donna told us.

The drought put a lot of strain on the family. With one child still away at

boarding school Donna and John needed to be able to pay their bills. Donna explained, "you've still got your rates, power bill, phone bill, fuel bills. And when you don't have income coming in to meet those expenses, it's very, very stressful."

The stress took its toll on the kids too. Donna told us, "They see us going through really hard times and it worries them and as much as you try for it not to interfere with their lives it does." But through it all, Donna recognised the importance of having a supportive network to help get them through. "We were lucky," she tells us, "We all sort of stuck together, the four of us. And we had lots of support within the community."

Added to the increased isolation brought on by the current pandemic, Donna told us that there was brief worry about food supplies. It should have been the last thing the family needed to worry about after the difficulties they've faced throughout the drought. With an impressive attitude of optimism Donna told us, "We had bin shoppers go through our little towns and clean them out. But you make do with what you have."

But through it all, Frontier Services has provided much needed assistance for Donna and her family. Our Outback Links program helped to link Donna with a volunteer who was able to help with a troublesome repair job. She explained to us that the family had hired a builder to

help with some renovations on the house but after receiving their upfront payment, he disappeared.

In good humour, Donna told us that not long after she received a call from a Frontier Services staff member; "He said, 'Can we get someone out there to help you?' And I thought, 'Does this really happen?'"

Frontier Services connected Donna with one of our volunteers who went and stayed with the family for a few weeks while he helped them out with the renovations. "He was just an amazing man," Donna gushed, "He was such a lovely man." The whole family benefited so much from the first experience that they hosted a second volunteer not long after. Donna told us that the practical assistance offered by our volunteers was second only to the company and friendship they provided. She told us, "Sitting around at night having a beer and a chat and a laugh, that means a lot."

To anyone considering volunteering with Frontier Services, Donna has some words of advice, "Go for it, just do it."

"We're the forgotten people"

Farmer Kev is grateful for the support of Frontier Services' Outback Links volunteers. Their company and practical assistance has been a source of hope through a bleak drought that continues to drag on.

We visited Kev on the property that he's owned for almost 40 years. "It's been pretty horrendous," he told us. The station spans over 140,000 acres in Central Western New South Wales. And the drought has hit the area hard.

Running cattle and goats on the station through the drought meant that they were constantly worried about being able to feed and water the livestock. "We had no feed whatsoever," Kev told us, "and virtually no water." We could hear the emotion in his voice as he spoke to us about how heart-wrenching it was to

see his livestock become so poorly. "You drive over the bank and there's 150 goats bogged and you have to pull 'em all out, one by one, with a piece of rope," he explained. "It's really hard because you know that they're probably not going to survive."

It's a situation that makes it difficult to be hopeful. And because it's one that happens far from the major cities, Kev explained that "it's almost like we don't exist, it's like we're the forgotten people out here." He told us that if it wasn't for charities like Frontier Services,

they wouldn't be here. He said that the Outback Links volunteers were "a massive help." Being on the farm during a drought can be extremely isolating and Kev loved that having the volunteers around meant he was, "hearing other stories from other walks of life." Plus, there's the added bonus that volunteers bring practical help for the farmers they visit. "You get three times as much done as what you do when you're on your own," Kev told us.

It was lovely to see Kev laughing and smiling as he spoke about the impact that the Outback Links volunteers had. He told us that the competitive side of him would come out when he had volunteers on the property; "When you've got someone there it gives you a lift and your energy levels seem to go up because you want to say, 'I can keep up, I can do that too!'"

Kev told us that he's even stayed in touch with some of the volunteers who have been out to help him. While they're spending time on the property Kev explains, "you get to know them and their families." So, even after they leave Kev often hears from them because of the connections made during their stay.

For now, Kev has hope for the future. He told us, "we're one good rain away from having good feed". But however long he has to wait for rain, Kev knows that he can count on Frontier Services to stand with him and continue to bring hope.

We could hear the emotion in Kev's voice as he spoke to us about how heart-wrenching it was to see his livestock become so poorly.



Kev sharing a smile with Frontier Services Programs Manager Michelle.



Breaking barriers and building bridges in South Australia

One of the most incredible things that we get to see here at Frontier Services is when the work of our Bush Chaplains meets the generosity of our Outback Links volunteers. It's a wonderful thing to witness the difference that it makes for people living in Remote Australia.

In late September, that's exactly what happened. Our Parkin-Sturt Remote Area Bush Chaplain, Sunny led a group of 17 volunteers on a group trip to Copley in South Australia. The trip was a result of Sunny's work with a local Aboriginal family and community. In connecting with the community who live in a remote region more than 600km from Adelaide, he discovered that they had a vision to restore and save Adnyamathanha local country. In recent years, the traditional lands have been mismanaged and the local community was looking for a way to restore it to generate a sustainable income while respecting the cultural significance of the place.

"The project is about showing the community that they are not alone. We are with you. Frontier Services is with you."

– Sunny, Parkin Sturt Remote Area Bush Chaplain

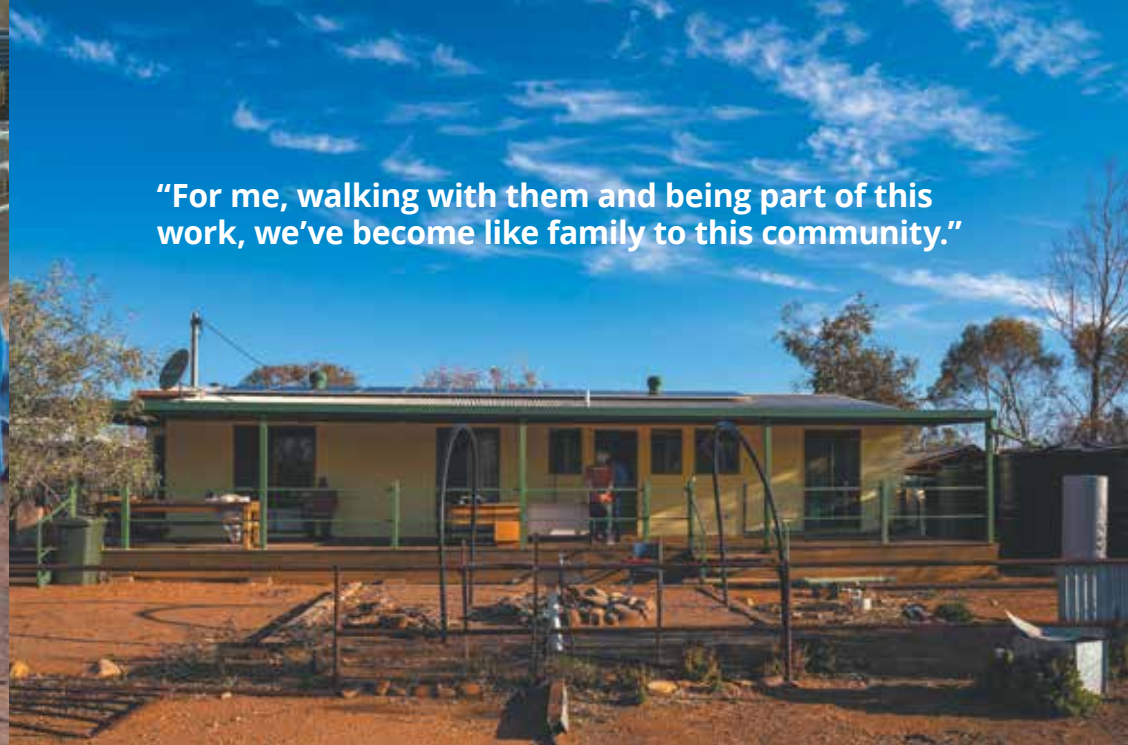


That's where Outback Links came in. Sunny told us that it was a big job that would need many hands to make light work. There was a long list of jobs that needed to be done; painting, plumbing, electrical repairs and gardening. But the volunteers were also there to provide much needed company for the people living in such a remote location. Our Outback Links volunteers are known for their love of having a yarn, sharing a cuppa and bringing a smile to the faces of the people they meet. And that's exactly what they did.

We spoke to Sunny before he headed out on the trip to find out what his expectations were for the project. "I've been visiting the community for the last two years and building a friendship with them," he told us. "I'm sure that the practical support will lead to an even deeper friendship."



"For me, walking with them and being part of this work, we've become like family to this community."



"We can walk hand in hand and give them the feeling that they're not alone."

– Sunny, Parkin Sturt Remote Area Bush Chaplain

Speaking to Sunny, it's clear that this project is close to his heart. "For me, walking with them and being part of this work, we've become like family to this community," he says. Sunny explained that he hoped that the volunteers would also get something out of the experience. "It's what I call breaking the barriers and building the bridges. Lots of our

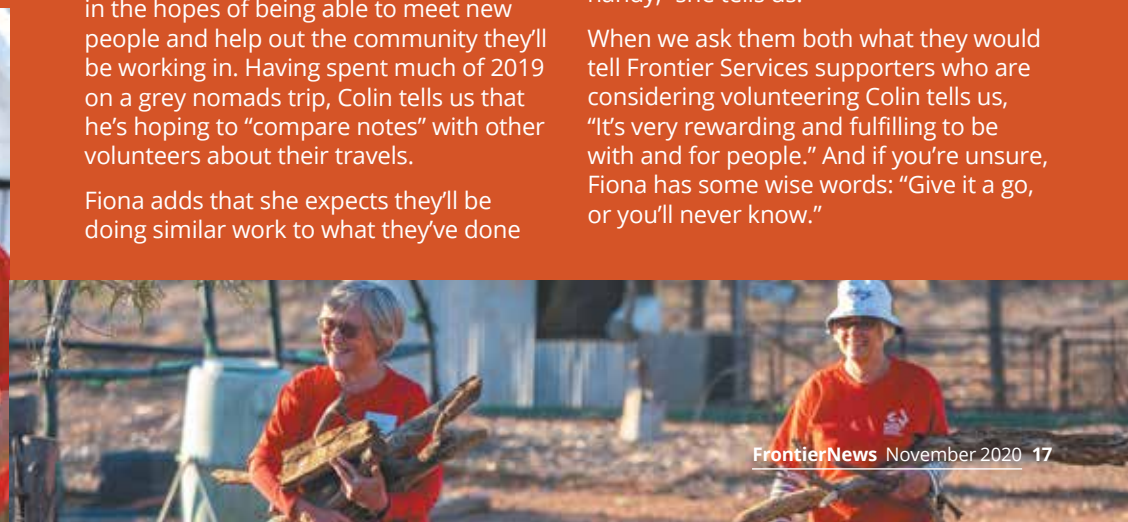
volunteers are retirees from the city so it will be an opportunity for them to share their stories and experience a different way of life."

Two of the volunteers heading out on the trip are husband and wife Colin and Fiona. Having volunteered with Frontier Services on a number of different placements before, they joined the group project in the hopes of being able to meet new people and help out the community they'll be working in. Having spent much of 2019 on a grey nomads trip, Colin tells us that he's hoping to "compare notes" with other volunteers about their travels.

Fiona adds that she expects they'll be doing similar work to what they've done

on their previous placements: "Fix-it work, painting and cleaning, cooking and maybe a bit of fencing." Colin chimes in to tell us that Sunny has already been in touch to provide a long list of maintenance tasks that he hopes the volunteers will help with. As a retired farmer and draughtsman, Fiona is pretty confident that Colin will enjoy the work. "He's very handy," she tells us.

When we ask them both what they would tell Frontier Services supporters who are considering volunteering Colin tells us, "It's very rewarding and fulfilling to be with and for people." And if you're unsure, Fiona has some wise words: "Give it a go, or you'll never know."





The Great Outback BBQ looks a little different this year. We know that you might not be able to host a BBQ the same way you have in previous years. Check out what our creative friends around the country have been doing instead. It might just spark some inspiration for your own event!

Host a virtual Great Outback BBQ

There's no need to worry about cleaning up the backyard or doing a crazy amount of dishes when you hold a virtual BBQ. All you have to do is video call your friends, chuck a couple of snags on the stove and enjoy your BBQ without leaving your house.



Our friends over at Rutherford Uniting Church wrote a sweet little poem to help raise awareness of Frontier Services' work for their virtual Great Outback BBQ.

Who doesn't love a drive-through?

If you and your friends are able to, a drive-through BBQ could be the way to go. Mask up and select a location, invite your guests and serve those sausage sizzles to them straight from the barbie!

Get creative and host your own Frontier Services event

It doesn't have to be a BBQ. Host any kind of event in line with the restrictions and health guidelines where you are. It can be a bake sale, a movie night or a pizza party. All you have to do is register your event at greatoutbackbbq.com.au and encourage your guests to support Frontier Services.

Buy some yummy ingredients, invite your friends over and have a pizza party instead of a BBQ.



A message of hope

Bush Chaplain, Pastor Cain Hartigan, reflects on 2020 and offers his Christmas message to Frontier Services' supporters.

It has been a hard 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic which we are experiencing and may have to experience for a while longer. It has been a time where we have been physically, mentally and spiritually stretched, not only in our own experiences but hearing the stories of others.

Stories such as the separation of families, financial struggles, loved ones passing and unfortunately much, much more. Our faith has been tested repeatedly. We as Christians must remember that Jesus Christ is with us on this journey. We have not been left alone on this walk even though we feel at times we have.

There is hope ahead and we will all get through this together.

I ask that we do not lose hope, let us pray each day for hope, resilience and compassion. Not just for ourselves but for others as well. For one day we will sit with the Father and feel his grace and His love, and we will see those who we have missed, and we will bathe in the glory of God's loving heart.

After you read this, please say a prayer for yourself and for others.

God bless.
Pastor Cain Hartigan



Artwork by
Bush Chaplain Julia Lennon

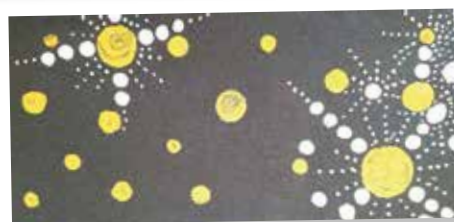
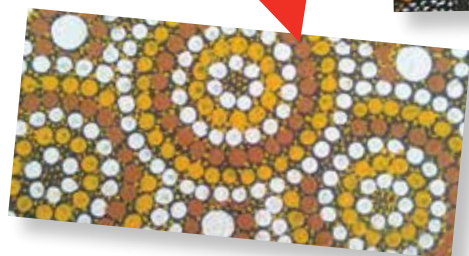
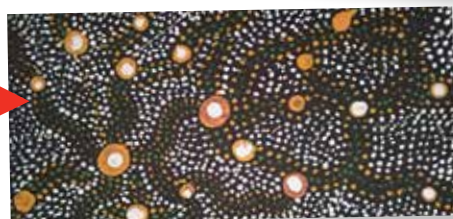
2020 Christmas Cards

Order now to avoid disappointment!

Our Christmas cards often sell out. This is a strictly limited print run, so we encourage you to order early. The artwork for this year's cards is by our very own Bush Chaplain Julia Lennon who looks after the Oodnadatta Remote Area.

We hope you love this year's cards as much as we do. Each pack contains 10 cards, with two of each design.

Hurry - available while stocks last! You can order online from our website or call 1300 787 247.



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**Mixed pack of 10 Christmas cards (2 of each design)*
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*Note: All orders must be received by Friday, 4 December 2020.			TOTAL \$

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The Gift of Hope this Christmas

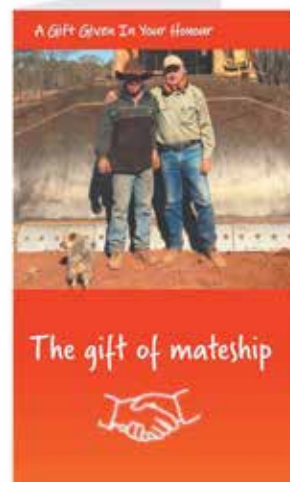
The Gift that Gives Twice!

Each year, our incredible Bush Chaplains and Outback Links volunteers travel vast distances to visit hundreds of families living in the most remote places of Australia to provide practical and pastoral care when it's needed most. This Christmas, you can help make someone's life in the bush a little easier. Simply choose the way you would like to help, purchase one or more of our tax-deductible Gift of Hope cards and gift it to a loved one, knowing you're making a real difference to the lives of people living in Outback Australia.

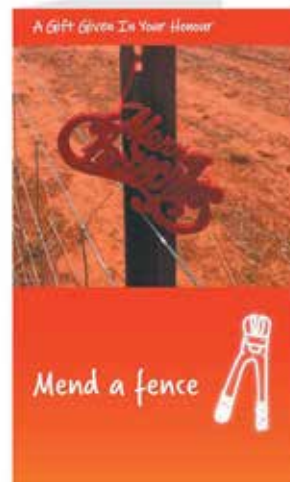
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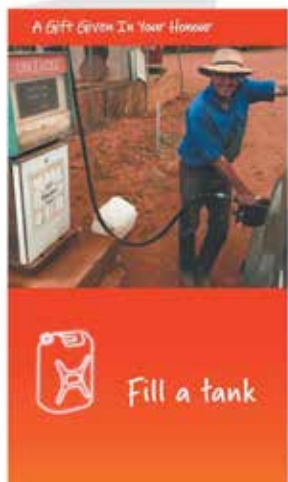
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Mend a fence (\$50): Practical support is often what's needed most and your gift allows our skilled volunteers to complete repairs and maintenance on farming stations.		\$50	\$
Fill a tank (\$100): Our Bush Chaplains spend much of their time travelling to visit people in isolation. Your gift helps to keep them on the road so they can be where they are needed most.		\$100	\$
The gift of mateship (Gift of your choosing): Show people doing it tough in the bush this Christmas that they're not alone by giving the gift of mateship. Every amount helps, but gifts over \$10 means we can cover our costs.		\$ Minimum \$10	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to include a donation to help the people of remote Australia. (Note: donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.)			\$
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