

anglican focus

Bush Ministry Fund news

BUSH MINISTRY FUND

“In contrast to the BCA, which does not support rural ministry in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, the BMF only supports rural ministry in parishes of our Diocese and gives at least 98 per cent of all money donated to support rural ministry,” says Bishop Cam Venables, as he updates us on the BMF’s vital work



Bishop Cameron in his Toowoomba office engaging with a large Facebook community in September 2018. To connect on Facebook, send a request to ‘Cam Venables’

It’s hard to capture the impact of ongoing drought with words. Photos of dusty paddocks and dying stock help to tell the story, as do the lined faces of primary producers...most of who have done everything right in managing

their land. But when the rains don't come, and the dams and tanks slowly empty...it grinds people down. How to pay the bills; repay the bank loans; pay the school fees; buy the fuel?

Grants made through the Archbishop's Emergency (Drought) Relief Appeal have made a difference to many. Dispersed through local businesses, such as pharmacies via 'FarmAssist', and community centres, the donations have certainly made a significant difference to the back pockets, health and morale of many in the Western Region. Not only have donations helped pay some bills, they have reminded communities in the west that they are supported by Anglicans in the city and on the coast.

The Bush Ministry Fund (BMF) is another key way that people partner with communities in the bush because it is through BMF grant subsidies that clergy, like Steffan van Munster, Rick Gummow, Terry Frewin and Daniel Sitaram, have shared life and ministry with rural communities experiencing drought. BMF subsidies also help to support the itinerant ministries of clergy like Geoff Reeder and Di Murphy who have driven from the coast for years to bring encouragement and prayer to communities in the Quilpie District.

When Western Region communities are struggling with drought, debt, and even significant fires, Christian faith and ministry give people hope. When churches are open for worship, people gather for prayer and teaching, and when a priest visits people in their homes there is an opportunity to share the burden of the challenges being faced.

I'm very thankful to God for those parishes, schools, and individuals who partner with communities in the bush via the Bush Ministry Fund. Through their visits, phone calls, fundraising, prayer, and many acts of generosity, in God's grace, they make a world of difference.

People often assume that the BMF and BCA are the same organisation, so I think it's worth noting that the Bush Ministry Fund (BMF) is quite different to the Bush Church Aid Society (BCA). BCA is a national Anglican organisation based in Sydney which supports ministry in many places across Australia. However, the BCA supports no rural ministry or parishes in our Diocese. Though it has more than \$15,000,000 in financial reserves, BCA has

significant annual costs (including staff, advertising, and rent) so that only 28 per cent of donations received are dispersed to support rural ministry (BCA, 2015 Annual Report).

In contrast to the BCA, which does not support rural ministry in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, the BMF only supports rural ministry in parishes of our Diocese and gives at least 98 per cent of all money donated to support rural ministry. This is possible because the Diocese provides administrative and financial support without charge, and it is such a blessing to have this support.

In 2019 the BMF helped resource and enable ministry in eight ACSQ parishes:

- **COMPLETED:** The Maranoa-Warrego Anglican Mission Area (\$21,000) – thankful to God for the four-year ministry of The Rev'd Steffan van Munster as priest and Police Chaplain. Please pray for Steffan and wife Eliane, as they settle into a new chapter of life and ministry based in Switzerland.
- **CONTINUING:** 4x4 Vehicle Lease (\$10,000) – thankful to God that ministry in the Maranoa-Warrego Anglican Mission Area is supported by a reliable and appropriate vehicle.
- **CONTINUING:** The Maranoa-Warrego Anglican Mission Area (\$40,000) – thankful to God for the ministry of The Rev'd Rick Gummow and his wife Tracey as they serve the communities and congregations of the co-operating parishes of Cunnamulla, Charleville, and Mitchell. After an action packed 12 months as Deacon, Rick was Ordained priest at St John's Cathedral in December last year.
- **CONTINUING:** The Leichhardt-Chinchilla Anglican Mission Area (\$40,000) – thankful to God for the ministry of The Rev'd Terry Frewin and his wife Karen as they serve the communities and congregations of the co-operating parishes of Leichhardt and Chinchilla.
- **CONTINUING:** Quilpie Parish and Diamantina Shire (\$10,000) – very thankful for the itinerant ministries of The Rev'd Di Murphy and The Rev'd Geoff Reeder to some of the most remote communities of our Diocese. Geoff was licenced 'Missioner to the Quilpie District' in 2018.
- **COMPLETED:** Dalby Parish (\$5,000) – thankful to God for the fruitful ministry of Annabelle Harth, part-time Children and Family Minister.

Annabelle moved away from Dalby in May 2019.

- NEW: Stanthorpe Parish (\$10,000) – subsidy of clergy stipend due to drought-related loss of income.

Please pray for all rural and remote communities in our Western Region, particularly those who are supported in some way by the BMF. If you, like me, are already supporting the BMF, please keep giving...in the knowledge that this is used by God to bless the lives of others. But, if you are not yet supporting and would like to find out more, please call Helen Briffa at the Western Region Office on (07) 4639 1875 or email her via hbriffa@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.

Editor's note (20 July 2020): since publication of this reflection, more current figures, from 2018, have been provided. These indicate that BCA's total revenue in 2018 was \$4,009,944, and that \$1,263,505 (31.5 per cent) of this was disbursed through grants supporting rural ministry. The remainder was principally used to cover the costs of staff, rent, and advertising (BCA, Annual Information Statement 2018).