



Report from Wesley Mission Brisbane



Context

Wesley Mission Brisbane (WMB) is an integral part of the Uniting Church in Queensland and operates as a mission activity of the Albert Street Uniting Church. Since its inception in 1907 WMB's purpose has been to participate in the mission of God towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people. In and through this mission and ministry we are actively committed to 'Uniting in Christ, acting with love, witnessing in faith and working for justice'.

Our mission is to walk alongside people in need, offering care and compassion and promoting choice, independence and community wellbeing. Wesley Mission Brisbane is built on the values of hope, justice, integrity, compassion, empowerment, innovation and respect.

At the heart of WMB's approach to mission is developing authentic relationships with integrity and compassion and we strive to live this out in all that we do. We are deeply embedded in local communities across south east Queensland offering support services that strengthen, empower and uphold those people who are most at risk in our community.

As a parish mission of the Albert Street Uniting Church, WMB is committed to worship, witness and service through the activities of the church and within our aged care, retirement living and community service activities.

Wherever we can, we seek to work with congregations within the Uniting Church as part of shared mission activities—this is fundamental to demonstrating our commitment to the shared call and vision of the Uniting Church in Queensland.

We strive to be a welcoming, caring and inclusive community that celebrates diversity and responds compassionately and creatively to the needs of others. As such, we welcome, encourage and

support staff and volunteers of many different backgrounds and faiths who are committed to our core values, and who will work with us in achieving our mission and vision.

WMB is one of the many faces of the Uniting Church engaging in God’s mission in the world. The Uniting Church logo is at the heart of our logo and we hope that our prayers, our people, our resources and our worship are seen as part of our church’s commitment to ‘Uniting in Christ, acting with love, witnessing in faith and working for justice’.

What we do

Since its first acts of compassion and kindness in the 1800s, the Albert Street congregation has had a vital presence in Brisbane, particularly among those who have found themselves in need or on the margins of society. The church is the spiritual home of Wesley Mission Brisbane and stands in the heart of the Brisbane CBD.

Wesley Mission Brisbane is about people and our vision is for a ‘compassionate, just and inclusive society for all’. In pursuit of our vision, mission and values we offer a wide range of community-based services supporting more than 100,000 people of all ages and stages of life across south east Queensland and the Fraser Coast. Throughout Australia we support more than 7000 members of the deaf community through Auslan interpreting and related services.

Our mission and service profile is described as follows:

- Albert Street Uniting Church**
 - Our spiritual home
 - Art from the Margins
 - Community Meal
 - Inclusion programs
- Wesley Community**
 - Disability support
 - Supported accommodation
 - Youth & family support
 - Crisis relief
 - Mental health support & accommodation
 - Hummingbird House
- Wesley Aged Care & Senior Services**
 - Residential Aged Care
 - Retirement Living
 - In-home Care
 - Centre & community-based support
 - Allied health
- Wesley Education & Child Care**
 - Centre-based Care
 - In-home Care
 - Family Day Care
- Wesley Employment & Training**
 - wmbMailpaQ printing & packaging service
 - Career Keys
 - Rewired IT

Organisational snapshot: people and resources

Staff and volunteers

We employ 2400 staff in Queensland and 540 Auslan sign language interpreters across Australia. Our staff are supported by passionate and active volunteers who contribute more than 220,000 hours of time to support our residents and clients.

Service locations

We operate from 65 service locations across Queensland’s south east corner and the Fraser Coast.

Services

We provide 80 community service programs, five supported accommodation communities for people living with disabilities, five childcare centres, 13 aged care communities, two retirement communities; plus in-home care allied health, hydrotherapy and social support services for elderly citizens. Our services reach more than 100,000 people each year.

Budget

WMB has an operating budget of \$160 million + capital budget of \$25 million per annum.

Our identified priorities

Worship gatherings that can include people who have never attended worship or belonged with church

WMB has a number of worshipping centres. The central worship space is a unique historic building located in the heart of Brisbane City. At each of the four weekly services there are nearly always visitors from across the world (and sometimes of other faiths) who regularly comment on the warm welcome. Morning tea is usually served on the terrace, where people passing in the street can be invited to share in this time.

The Albert Street congregation is such that we have a significant number of people attending worship who have come as visitors to our country and who continue to return to worship among us. It is very pleasing to have people who may live overseas make return visits to Albert Street on each visit.

The Albert Street church is open each weekday from 10 am until 2 pm, and is supported by an active volunteer welcoming team. We have more than 10,000 people visiting the church each year.

Albert Street also welcomes people who live with disadvantage. As a result we believe that the members of the congregation have grown in their faith and in their ability to relate to people of all walks of life.

Our full-time spiritual and pastoral care coordinator and team of chaplains have been working across the organisation to enhance organisational thinking, focus and cultural change around the meaning of spirituality and 'person-centred care'. WMB also offers a multitude of worship centres and opportunities for worship and spiritual reflection and discovery across all of our aged care communities and communities for retirement. While many of the residents from Christian faith backgrounds attend services, there has been a strong sense of welcome and engagement of people who have not been involved in church or not attended church for many years.

Wheller on the Park (Chermside) is home to a significant number of retired ministers and those who have worked in pastoral roles both in the Uniting and other Christian churches. It has been wonderful to see how these people express their Christian ministry while living in this diverse community.

Making faith sharing a priority for the Uniting Church

The WMB Albert Street church is actively involved in three distinct missional programs supporting people who live with disadvantage.

1. Art from the Margins

The Art from the Margins program supports the creative development of artists living with mental health issues, disabilities, homelessness and disadvantage. The program aims to foster individual

and community wellbeing through engagement with art. Art from the Margins public exhibitions, such as the annual Brisbane Festival Exhibition and the St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital Exhibition program provide an invaluable platform for disadvantaged artists to connect with a wide public audience. The most significant event on the calendar is the Art from the Margins Brisbane Festival Exhibition. The 2015 event was once again held at City Hall and featured 450 artworks from 300 artists over the four-day event. This year's theme was 'Creating Wellness' and the program included a public forum that explored the connections between creative expression and enhanced wellbeing.

Art from the Margins moved in early 2016 from Chermside to the refurbished heritage church building on Brunswick Street in Fortitude Valley, positioning the program closer to the cultural art precinct of the city.

2. Community meal

The community meal welcomes more than 100 guests (people who are homeless or living in hardship, including young families) each week to a quality meal prepared by a band of volunteers. While people come for the meal they also come because of the genuine welcome and sense of community they experience around the meal table. In 2015 the community meal was relocated to a larger and more welcoming location above the WMB Emergency Relief Service in Fortitude Valley and we expect to open the meal another night(s) during 2016.

3. English corner

English corner is an international student mission that has been operating weekly at Wesley House for the past five years. It provides various lessons including Bible studies, building community, getting jobs and perseverance. The Albert Street congregation is involved in the program with members often recommending English corner to International students who come into the church.

English corner is quite often the first place that students come to after they arrive in Brisbane. They come with the free English classes list in their hands and have usually come because their friends have recommended that they do so. Some have found us through the Internet/Facebook.

Church planting

Church planting has not been a priority for WMB. However, when exploring new WMB services, it is our practice to try and engage with local congregations to enable further exploration of witness and service as part of a local congregation's widening of their mission outreach to the local community.

Developing church planters – pioneers and entrepreneurs

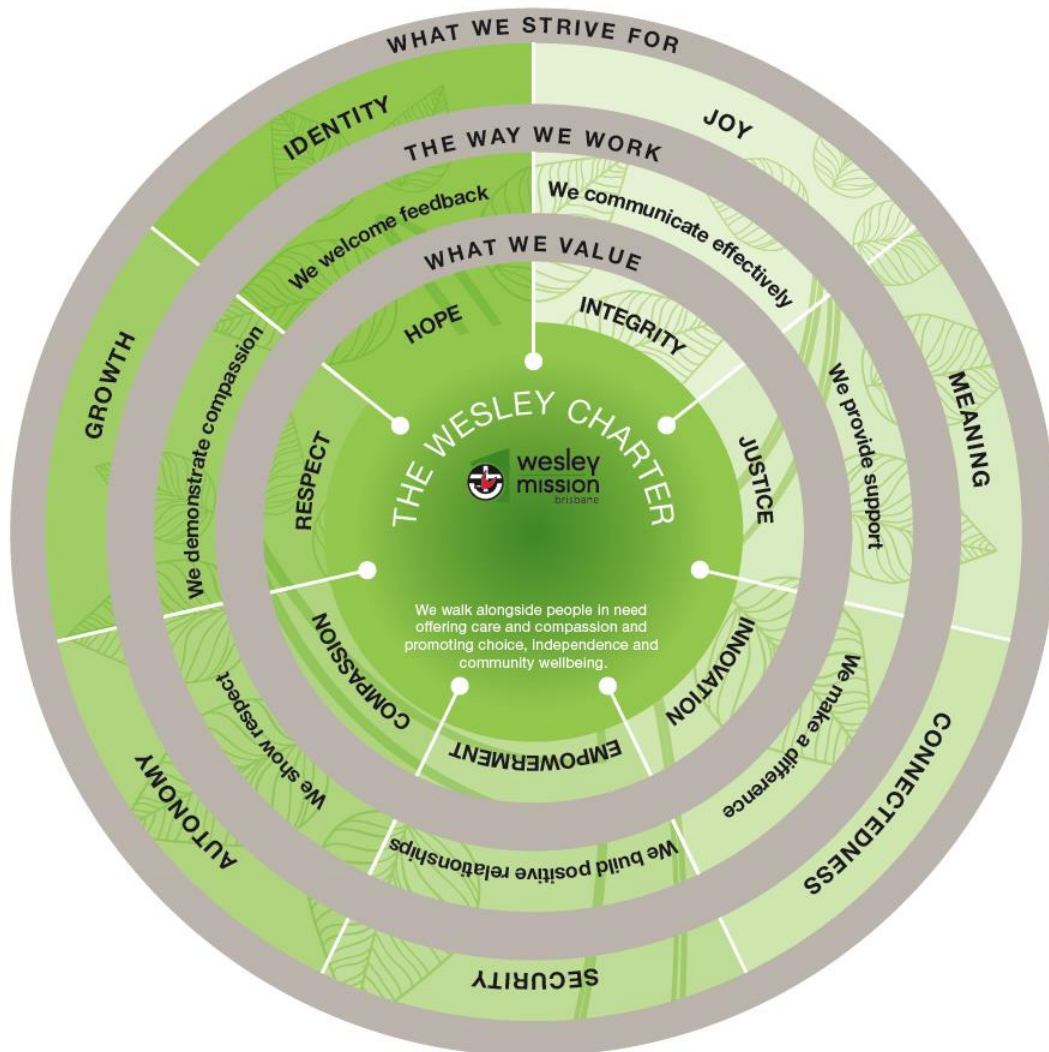
WMB has relationships with a number of congregations located next door or close to one of our community services. These involve people from the congregation including ministers taking an active pastoral support role with the people 'living next door' or close by.

Holy Spirit as defibrillator

During 2015 an organisation-wide process of consultation was undertaken, exploring how the Christian mission, vision and values of WMB are lived out, in and through 'The way we work' and 'What we strive for' as we support people in need within the community.

This has resulted in the development of the Wesley Charter, a simple tool that is all about engaging in conversations across the breadth of the organisation about what brings meaning and hope in people's lives.

A copy of the front page of the Wesley Charter 'wheel' is below:



Children, youth, young adults and family ministry as a priority

WMB offers a wide range of support services for children, young people and young families aimed at enabling people to grow in confidence, connectedness within their community and capacity to achieve their aspirations.

- 1300 children are involved in Wesley childcare and education programs each week.
- Children from our childcare centre at Chermside (available for both staff and members of the local community) regularly visit the people living in our aged care homes (supported by our childcare staff).
- Our Elorac Centre at Ellen Grove connects with and supports a wide range of children, young people and young families (including members of the local Indigenous population) and there is pastoral support provided through the Forest Lake Uniting Church.
- Our Logan Youth Foyer at Woodridge provides supported accommodation for 21 young people including young refugees.

- WMB provides safe, fun and meaningful activities for hundreds of young people after school and during school holidays at Thrower House at Palm Beach and community centres at Ormeau, Upper Coomera and Runaway Bay. These services include support for young people excluded from the school system.
- The POWER UP program is based at Mabel Park State High School in the Logan region and supports young parents to remain in school while pregnant and parenting. The school-based program values the importance of education and recognises the difficulties faced by young teenage parents in accessing mainstream schooling.

Report

Wesley Mission Brisbane is positioning for growth, change and innovation

Over the past 18 months WMB has continued to position itself for growth in response to changing needs and the ever-changing government policy framework, funding challenges and regulatory environment.

We continue to implement our 2014-2018 strategic plan (*Moving forward with justice and compassion*).

Due to the ageing of our population (particularly those over 75 years) there is going to be a substantial requirement for additional services to help people age well in their homes and local communities and if desired in a retirement community or residential care home. To this end we have been expanding the range and accessibility of our in-home care services and centre-based services across Brisbane and Moreton Bay regions and have embarked on a substantial capital redevelopment program.

Supporting people living with dementia in their own home and also in residential aged care homes is one of the most significant challenges in the Australian community. This is one of our key focus areas as we plan for our future services.

With major priorities including growing our residential care and community-based support for older people, the expansion of disability services, tackling social isolation and increased services for youth and families, we have continued to work with our supporters and partners to respond to people in need in our community (particularly where no services exist).

Key achievements/initiatives

Our key achievement will always be the sense of growth, empowerment and hope that people living with disadvantage experience through their interaction with support services offered by WMB. We support 100,000 people across south east Queensland (and across Australia as we work with 7000 members of the deaf community and their families).

We continue to seek ways of identifying unmet need in the community and where we can, partnering with people and other organisations to find innovative ways to support people.

Five examples of this approach:

HummingbirdHouse – opening in May 2016

In Queensland today there are 3700 children living with a life-limiting condition—many of these children will not live to reach their 18th birthday. This places enormous stress on these children and their immediate and extended families. There is no children's hospice in Queensland although there is one in Sydney (Bear Cottage) and also in Melbourne (Very Special Kids).

WMB has partnered with the Hummingbird House Foundation and early in 2015 the former Prime Minister Tony Abbott joined more than 250 community members on the Wheller Gardens site at Chermside to officially 'turn the sod' on Hummingbird House.

HummingbirdHouse will provide respite care, hospice care and a sense of warm embrace for children and families.

A special event to mark the completion of this \$9 million facility is being held on the 21 May, 2016 (during Synod).

We are grateful for the support of the Commonwealth and state governments who have contributed \$3 million and also the support of a philanthropic foundation that is contributing \$3.25 million towards the capital cost.

We are looking forward to welcoming our first families in June 2016 into this new facility.

Asher House – Wynnum West

WMB staff have been working with a community group called Friends of Casuarina Lodge for two years. This group of families were seeking better ways to support their family members who were in need of 24-hour care and support as a result of sustaining an acquired brain injury (ABI). Many of these families live around the Wynnum or Bayside suburbs.

The Bayside Uniting Church had ceased operation of their church buildings in Sibley Road and after collaboration with the Bayside church council, WMB purchased the beneficial ownership of the land from the church to build a supported accommodation community for 12 people living with an ABI.

Residents and their families chose to name the new home Asher House, meaning "happy and blessed". Asher House will provide supported accommodation, rehabilitation support, respite care and other special purpose needs.

On 8 December 2015 supporters, staff, future residents and their families gathered on the site to officially turn the sod on this innovative supported accommodation development. It is due to be completed in July 2016.

We are looking forward to a growing partnership with the Bayside congregation and working in collaboration with staff from the Blue Care facility located next door.

Clear Breeze apartments

Another group of people living with disadvantage in our community are those living with mental illness. There is a chronic lack of affordable supported accommodation for people suffering an enduring mental illness. Wesley Mission Brisbane partnered with Mantle Housing, an advocacy group of families and adults living with mental illness, to deliver the new state-of-the-art apartments in north west Brisbane which opened in October, 2015. The residents chose the name Clear Breeze, signifying both the wonderful breeze the apartments catch and the opportunities their new home offers.

The first of their kind in Queensland, the building design and service model have been developed with input from the in-coming residents. The community offers the 14 residents a much-needed choice in permanent housing, independence and security while giving their ageing parents and carers peace of mind into the future.

Youngcare supported accommodation

Our partnership with Youngcare saw the opening of our third Youngcare apartments at Woolloowin in 2015. WMB provides care and support for residents with 24-hour high care support needs. WMB has commenced building four new apartments at Coomera, due to be completed in July 2016. This Uniting Church land is also used by Blue Care (for a respite centre) and the local congregation.

OzHarvest Queensland

OzHarvest Queensland, which Wesley Mission Brisbane operates, continues to expand and deliver rescued food to people in need from Bribie Island in the north to Coolangatta in the south and Ipswich in the west. In a typical week our teams pick up 20 tonnes of fresh food from up to 200 shops, restaurants and food outlets, and deliver this food on the same or the next day to 150 community groups, church and charitable organisations—free of charge to the organisation. Food is delivered to eight Uniting Church congregations and at least 21 other Christian churches, congregations and organisations.

Without OzHarvest, this surplus food would end up in landfill. This simple concept has substantial community benefit: reducing costs for community organisations, preventing good food going to waste and enabling church and community groups to provide food for people in need.

Challenges/risks as we progress (and response)

Within the aged care and community services sectors, we are in one of the most profound periods of reform and structural change experienced over the last 30 years.

1. There is already significant market activity and consolidation within the residential aged care, in-home care and retirement living sectors. Over the last 12 months, for-profit providers have raised capital to position for market acquisitions and there have been significant mergers and acquisitions in both the not-for-profit and profit sectors. It is anticipated that there will be further market consolidation in the next few years.

WMB response

WMB has been working through our strategic focus of preparing for these changes over the last three years. We have sufficient size in a range of different service areas and a clear pathway to grow our services for older people within the south east corner of Queensland.

2. The reforms are moving towards 'consumer-directed care' where people can choose a care provider(s) that best meets their needs. Their choice will be influenced by a range of factors including accessibility, price, reputation and market presence of the provider, and the value of the service for the price paid.

WMB response

We were an early adopter of consumer-directed care in our in-home care services and have established services models, systems infrastructure and a reputation for 'value for money services'.

3. There are increasing restrictions and pressure on the amount of government funding provided to support the care services cost for older people and people living with disabilities. There is also an expectation of greater 'user pays' for services provided. This will undoubtedly mean that some people who may need a service, and who have limited financial means, may choose not to receive and pay for a care service because they have a difficult choice – *Do I pay my electricity bill or receive a much needed in-home care service?*

WMB response

For our in-home care and residential aged care, WMB provides services on the basis of need rather than the ability of the person to contribute the full cost of a 'user contribution' (as determined by government policy). We have a very high rate of pensioners

(concessional residents) living in our residential care homes and receiving care and support from our in-home care services. We see this as part of the values and ethos of the Uniting Church.

4. The government policy and reform program for the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has not been finalised (particularly in Queensland). This makes planning our response to the roll-out of this scheme difficult.

WMB response

Because we have established a range of services for people living with disabilities we are well placed with our systems and service models to expand as is appropriate based on people's needs and when funding becomes available. The WMB board has conducted scenario planning exercises to anticipate potential changes with the implementation of the NDIS.

Other Issues to be addressed

Over the past two years WMB has been working in collaboration with key stakeholders within the Synod to develop a new constitution for Wesley Mission Brisbane. There is intention to clarify and formalise collaborative relationships, roles and responsibilities for WMB and key stakeholders within the Uniting Church which will be reflected in the new constitution.

It is anticipated that the new constitution will be finalised prior to the May Synod in Session.

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