



# The Queensland Baptist Forum

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## Changeover at the Archives

On July 1, 2020, Dr Pam Condie took up her position as Archivist, succeeding Dr David Parker who stood down after having occupied the position since the early 1980s. A morning tea was held on Wed 24th June to mark the transition. Dr Pam Condie, OAM, GradDipTheol, BTh., brings a wide background and varied experiences and training to her new position.

She attended Sunday School and Girls' Brigade at Greenslopes, then Annerley Baptist. Through Girls' Brigade Pam committed her life to the Lord Jesus and was baptized by Rev Louis Miller at Annerley. She worked in Statistics at the University of Queensland before transferring to the Pathology Department at the UQ Medical School.

Pam then joined the Women's Royal Australian Air Force and served on various RAAF bases in Victoria as a Clerk Medical until her marriage to David in January 1967. Pam and David have three children and seven grandchildren (now all young adults).

Following their marriage, Pam and David settled in Melbourne where David was an aircraft engineer with Trans Australian Airlines (TAA) and attended Northcote Baptist. They then joined Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), moving to Ballarat where MAF-Air (MAF's engineering department) was based and attended Wendouree Baptist. They re-joined the airline, transferred to Mt Isa and attended the Baptist Church. Here Pam was asked to start their Girls' Brigade company.

The family eventually returned to Brisbane, settled in Albany Creek and attended Stafford North Baptist where Pam became a Girls' Brigade leader and later Captain. They joined the new Baptist fellowship at Albany Creek (South Pine Community Church), where she served on the Board of Administration and the Eldership. She was also appointed Office Administrator before retiring to resume biblical studies.

After her Air Force service, Pam worked as Clerical Supervisor Radiology Department, Queen Victoria Hospital, Melbourne. After focusing on home duties for several years, Pam rejoined the workforce and worked in Customer Relations with Commercial Union Insurance then GB Queensland's State Training Coordinator.

Her next position was a Project Officer with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in the Queensland Government (also occasionally functioning as Executive Officer). During Pam's Girls' Brigade service, she was the Queensland

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### BHQ Meetings 2020: 26 Oct (AGM) 2pm @The Baptist Archives

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## ***Public Advocacy – Why would Baptists in Australia bother? A brief report from Australia***

By David Parker

This paper was prepared by the author for a conference in USA which had to be cancelled because of the Coronavirus restrictions and is presented here unaltered (references simplified). It was written on the conference topic with an American audience in mind and within the time/word limits of the conference.

### **A tentative foray into a minefield**

Currently, Australian Baptists as a denomination would not be generally noted as leaders in the field of public advocacy, or even very active in the public arena. There are, of course, exceptions! I suppose Tim Costello, former CEO of World Vision Australia, former minister of Collins St, Melbourne and famous for his protests against the gambling and gun ownership, would be the most outstanding. Lesser lights could named –in my area Rev Brian Robertson (a local pastor who issued newsletters for years through the Baptist Union on political topics), and Mrs Wendy Francis (State Director of Australian Christian Lobby. But it may be argued that they are acting more as individuals than as representatives of the church. Other churches that once were prominent, especially the Uniting Church and some sections of the Catholics and the Anglicans are also now quiet. There are perhaps good reasons for this, especially the sexual abuse and religious vilification scandals and the generally low esteem in which churches are held in a secular age. So no one dares put their heads above the ramparts for fear of being shot down. But this has not always been the case, as we shall see.

### **Definition**

We need to restrict our comments in this short paper. By “Public Advocacy”, I mean not just holding an opinion about socio-political issues. Most would have some views on this, even though they might be very rudimentary in contrast with, say, well-developed Catholic social teaching. We mean the conviction followed through by reasonably well-developed practice that it is right and proper to engage in the promotion of one’s convictions in the public arena. As David Bebbington (*The Nonconformist Conscience*, 1982, p ix) put it of another period, Christians felt they had “a responsibility to make known their views on national issues”, their “political goals” were pursued “with all the fervour of religious conviction” and they “turned humdrum pressure-group politics into vociferous crusades”.

### **Baptist Reaction**

Perhaps a typical reaction in Australia to this concept today might be, Why would Baptists bother with this sort of activity? Pragmatically, it is a waste of time (because we are too small and insignificant to expect to have much influence), and theoretically (we do have

many other things to do which are more important to us). But it is not so simple, of course!

It is a big subject, and this tentative foray is of necessity selective, parochial and no doubt superficial. As with Jerusalem in Psalm 122:3, this presentation is “closely compacted together”!

### **Historical and contextual**

#### **Origins and Examples**

Baptists did not appear in Australia until 1831, about 40 years after the establishment of the penal settlement. By then, the convict society was giving way to a new colonial era. Baptists, who probably could not have started in the country any earlier, were not prominent or part of the establishment. They were largely British, or English in origin and as such were part of a community which in the homeland was enjoying new found freedoms with the passing of the Reform Act of 1832 and later measures. This was also almost exactly the Victorian era in England, with its complex and often depressing social history.

So the 19<sup>th</sup> century Australian Baptists were not just settlers taking up life in a new country in formation with all the hope that would mean. They were also possessed of a new socio-political spirit unleashed in their homeland where the restrictions against the Baptists were now being lifted – restrictions which had existed from the beginning in the early 1600s, as witnessed by Helywys’ famous plea for religious freedom. I would argue that these two conditions, a new “psychology of optimism” (Bebbington, p 1) and the creative pioneering situation, meant that they expected they would be able to participate in public life quite freely – allowing of course for their particular social level and interests. Of course, the socio-political situation in Australia was not an exact replica of England (for one thing, there was no established church, even though the Church of England might have thought there was) and being a brand new society, of necessity peopled by strong minded individuals, there was bound to be a lot of vying for a place in the sun.

It is not surprising therefore that some Baptists did become known for their political engagement. The first real minister in Sydney, Rev John Saunders (1834-42) was a good example – a trained lawyer and having already turned down a political career in England, he not only firmly established the church in Sydney after a previous shaky start but became publicly applauded as a

crusader against alcoholism, convict transportation and an advocate for the indigenous people.

Soon after him there was Rev John Greenwood (1870-76) who while pastor in Nottingham is said to have “absorbed the politics of the Midlands Dissenters” (“Greenwood, James (1839–1882)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*). He was soon politically active, taking up the cause of public education. However his parishioners objected to these activities and he left the ministry and his Christian faith soon after. His lasting legacy was to be known as the inspiration behind the public education system of NSW which is current to the present day.

In Queensland, Rev William Whale, minister of the City Tabernacle 1885-1903, had already welcomed the description “political parson” while back home in Middlesborough. He actively involved himself in public issues in Brisbane, and in fact, did question whether others were sufficiently zealous in taking up the opportunities that presented themselves in this ministry.

One who definitely did not hesitate was Rev TE Ruth, Collins Street Baptist Melbourne, 1914-22 and Pitt Street Congregational Sydney, 1923-38, who modelled himself on Lloyd George and “revelled in the atmosphere of the hustings” (“Ruth, Thomas Elias (1875–1956)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*) His highly politicised after-church rallies sometimes called for a bodyguard to protect him against supporters of his antagonists.

Others were prominent in social welfare but not in overt political action. One such notable was JH Goble of Footscray Melbourne, first president of the Baptist Union of Australia, who was honoured by his community with a life-size statue dominating the main street of his suburb. Others, ministerial and lay, were politically involved although not necessarily crusaders for particular causes. For example, 4 of the first 12 mayors of Brisbane were prominent Baptists. Women especially found a strong united voice through groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, perhaps even to be considered a suffragette movement. Cecelia Downing (1858-1952) of Melbourne was a prime example with her influence affecting even Baptist structures!

### Organisational efforts

As Baptist Unions developed, social responsibility assumed organisational form through “Public Questions” committees from which appeared position statements and media releases (some of which found their way to politicians’ in-trays), and allowed for discussion at Assemblies and reportage in denominational newspapers. Topics covered the usual evangelical “sins” – sabbath observance, sex, gambling and drink, as well as many others (like pacifism, racism, conscription, indigenous people, education, role of women, sex education, abortion) but in later times, other some more serious issues like the nuclear threat, disarmament, gender issues, and AIDS, were ventilated.

However, as one study points out, not all the constituency were enthusiastic supporters and once again, it was often a matter of individual interest rather than overall church policy (Ken Smith, *Religion and Social Issues: Discussions and Resolutions of the Baptist Union of Queensland, 1938-1973*).

These Baptist efforts were supported by state-based interdenominational Councils of Churches which expressed the common evangelical protestant concerns on social issues as well as providing mechanisms for joint action on evangelism, social welfare and other such matters. These councils, based broadly on the English Free Church Federal Council, flourished during the early and middle 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the period of the “wowsers” (defined as prudish teetotalers, or killjoys) Their influence waned in the last third of the century, and most became impotent and then non-existent.

During war times, many utterances were made on relevant topics. They were mostly patriotic but occasionally some other views stood out, as did an anti-conscriptionist pastor who was disciplined, and the pacifist lay man who was interned! Similarly in the Cold War period there were occasional anti-war and anti-nuclear statements. Then in Vietnam war period and later, a few Baptists adopted the somewhat different approach of the emerging generation inspired by the counter-cultural movements and “political Christianity” of the Latin American kind, becoming more outspoken on key issues. The Lausanne movement was also a factor, advocating equal place to evangelism and social responsibility. Some Baptists became very prominent, including Dr Athol W Gill of Queensland and then Victoria. Other denominations were generally far more active and strident, although their range of topics was restricted, and their actual political engagement very limited.

All this has now disappeared in the new hostile atmosphere. The best we get is a call to obey the “two great commandments” (evangelism and neighbour love), the latter of which produces only compassionate ministries and no public advocacy (or even just “rice Christianity” where such activities are aimed at softening up a sceptical secular community for evangelism).

This situation is inextricably bound up with the characteristic Australian arrangement where government financial aid is freely available for religious (and charitable) organisations involved in education, health and welfare. Dating back to the 1830s, this cosy system means large amounts of government funding are channelled through church organisations who provide the operational requirements in compliance with ever more strict and bureaucratic regulation coming from the state. So now most denominations have absolutely huge aged care and welfare arms, and local churches and independent groups are increasingly venturing into lower education. In these cases, the bureaucracy and scope of the operations effectively precludes the

possibility of involvement individually by local church members.

So churches and denominations are focused on developing smoothly operating churches designed to attract good local support to ensure their viability, with little place for public advocacy on matters of serious concern. The Baptist Union of Queensland, for example, has no statement on social responsibility in its new set of values adopted only in 2019, and it has almost no structure that would allow for actions public advocacy. It has little wish to express itself except on the most pressing issues. When it does, the issues seem to be those on which agreement is assured in advance, and are restricted to those directly affecting the churches, as indicated by the most recent pronouncement on “Sexuality and Marriage” (2018). Sometimes direct submissions to government occur but these are mostly actioned at executive level. The strict party political system operating at most levels of government means most effective advocacy would need to be on a personal basis.

So much for the historical context. Now we ask the big question, Why should Baptists bother?

**Theology**

**Can there be a Baptist theology of Public Advocacy**

To reiterate, currently, Baptists seem to be driven by a theology of evangelical piety and church growth which do not lead to much interest in public advocacy, or even preclude it altogether. But could there be a distinctively Baptist theology that would provide a driving force to change this, so that Baptists would have a persuasive theological reason to be involved in public advocacy?

In the interests of space, I present my thoughts in the form of some theses, with at least some connection and development (if perceived only by the writer!).

**Theses**

The current fixation with evangelism, personal piety and the associated understanding of the church is perhaps understandable given the origins of the Baptists, at least the popular understanding of this – focusing on individual conversion expressed in believers’ baptism, even though the ecclesiology of the founders is not well understood and nor has that set of beliefs been replaced with anything more than a very simplistic and pragmatic view of the church and baptism.

- What was distinctive about the achievement of the first Baptists was a new ecclesiology (not so much a doctrine of the baptism) – a believers’ church expressed through believer’s baptism was the true church, in contrast with the existing false churches, as shown in Helwys’ *Mystery of Iniquity*.
- In the context then of a State Church, this was, sociologically speaking, a sectarian position.
- The Anabaptists, with a similar ecclesiology, were strongly sectarian, eg, by denying the right of believers to take part in governmental functions (the magistracy).

- The Baptists did not adopt this position, presumably because their English socio-political background which differed from that of the Swiss, led to a different theological mix.
- Helwys’ famous plea to the King for religious freedom was based on a traditional interpretation of Romans 13 which gave the state a real sovereignty but one that was subordinate to the ultimate sovereignty of God.
- His plea was clearly a matter of principle, not one of self-interest, which has often been the case. (Various expressions of this position appear other early Baptist confessions.)
- By itself this text (Romans 13) does not give a basis for a theology of government in a hostile context (cf 1 Peter and Revelation 13), and also it needs to be “translated” to relate to a modern liberal democracy.
- Neither does it give much incentive for public advocacy apart from the general appeal of obedience to the Sovereign God. Presumably in context, Romans 13 was not meant to be a call to arms!
- If the authority of Scripture is a key Baptist tenet, it is not surprising that efforts to find a broader theology might, under a biblicistic hermeneutic, produce a “reconstructionist” type of approach where provisions of the OT law are applied directly to modern situations. Although an inadequate theology, this approach certainly creates plenty of incentive for public advocacy in calling for all people to submit to divine sovereignty under pain of eternal sanctions.
- A better approach may be to follow the Reformers’ lead and, employing a more nuanced theology, calling on the Second Use of the Law to provide a restraint on human behaviour.
- A more “THEological” alternative used by many “radical Christians” appeals especially to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century prophets. In line with full recognition of God as both holy and loving, there is the call to “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:6). Although this provides a scenario for emulating the zeal of those prophets strongly advocating for obedience to divine sovereignty, without any further elaboration it is still applicable to a theocracy rather than the modern secular world.
- More broadly, the Lausanne movement affirmed that since “God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men (sic)”, it is necessary to “share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression.” This is a broad-brush approach.
- Returning to basics once again, and our more or less universally held Baptist convictions in regard to Christology—at the simplest level, belief in “the Christ”, that is, “the Messiah”, involves the notion of the ideal ruler, and hence by implication, a kingdom or rulership involving authority over

<p>subjects and domains, leading to at least a notion of ultimate universal sovereignty. This would imply the validity of public advocacy calling for obedience to this Messiah.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One development of a simple interpretation of Romans 13 led ultimately to “Christendom” where, by force of law, Christianity was imposed on Europe and there was an enforced and enforceable union of church and state, a situation which has now thankfully passed away in the Western world, historically and in theory (although not necessarily elsewhere), as Nigel Wright has forcefully argued in <i>Disavowing Constantine</i>, Paternoster 2002).</li> <li>• Nigel Wright is perhaps the best recent example of Baptist thinking on this topic. He proposes a paradigm which calls on the doctrines of creation, preservation and redemption to give an account of the whole of reality. (<i>Free Church Free State</i> (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005).</li> <li>• According to this view, the social order has been created by God as the environment in which people are to live, especially in terms of the cultural mandate, and one in which people may live out their lives peacefully, freely and fairly.</li> <li>• However there is ambivalence - it is a fallen world and the State is a temporary expedient ordained by God to restrain the chaos and anarchy of this fallen world while it awaits redemption. This is a doctrine of the “limited State” of Romans 13, a “permissive ordinance”, a temporary substitute in a world of unbelief for the Kingdom of God</li> <li>• On the other hand, the church by the Spirit participates in the fellowship and mission of the</li> </ul>	<p>triune God and God rules in the church by his Spirit. The church’s first task is to seek God’s kingdom and be conformed to God in Christ through the Spirit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yet within this state/church division, in the political realm Christians are bound to argue for solutions and remedies which operate with what is humanly possible.</li> <li>• In fact, it is the Christian duty to seek for the redemptive improvement of the social order (which being fallen, it cannot do of its own power) by political participation inter alia, although not as church but as individuals.</li> <li>• Consequently, the church should, by all means, seek to influence the social order, but only through persuasion and appeal since this is the way of the cross.</li> <li>• In this way Christians can fulfil their obligations under the cultural mandate as an aspect of the restoration of all human experience to its intended goals.</li> <li>• This is a baptistic theology in that it necessarily involves a free church in a free state, even if it does not relate directly to Helwys’ initial ecclesiology.</li> <li>• Hence we have a Baptistic theology which does provide a strong incentive for Public Advocacy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>So we have provided a brief historical survey showing some of the factors influencing Public Advocacy in Australia, and some theological considerations showing good reason for them to now become involved.</p>
<p><i>(Continued from page 8)</i> <b>Qld Baptists, 2005-2020</b></p> <p>impacted most areas of work, requiring the denomination to increase its support of churches. Baplink has also provided financial services support. Its loan register topped \$100 million, indicating the expanded scope of buildings and property now required.</p> <p>The BUQ was led for much of the time by a stable group of officers, although there was considerable fluctuation in some areas, and not all ministries flourished.</p> <p>There were many internal reviews, but a major overall denominational review stipulated by the Constitution to be held every 5 years was not carried out until 2017. This revealed many concerning issues, especially the need for new focus, vision and leadership. It has resulted in far-reaching changes, including the abolishment of the positions of General Superintendent and Regional Coordinator.</p> <p>The new system, with the tag, “A Collaborative Movement of God-directed Churches and Services”, commencing in 2020 has reverted to a pattern similar to the 1980s, involving multiple senior leaders and a buzz of Directors—with nearly a dozen part-time Regional Ministers a new feature.</p>	<p><i>(Continued from page 1)</i> <b>Changeover at Archives</b></p> <p>State Commissioner and served on the National Council. Pam served on the Duke’s Award Queensland State Award Committee for 10 years (a ministerial appointment). In 1999 she was awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia for service to youth leadership development in Queensland.</p> <p>Pam and David continue to support the work of MAF as volunteers and professionally. Pam was on the MAF Australia Board for 14 years, including over 4 years as Board Chair.</p> <p>In 2020 Pam completed an 8 year term on the Queensland Baptists Board and served on various Board sub-committees. Currently, Pam is President of the Women’s Royal Australian Air Force Association (Qld).</p> <p>The Condis now live in North Lakes and are members of Lifepoint Baptist at Rothwell. Pam holds a Bachelor and a Graduate Diploma in Theology and has completed a Doctor of Ministries from the Australian College of Theology through Malyon College.</p>

## ***Baptists in Queensland and the Spanish 'Flu How did they cope in 1919?***

By David Parker



Newmarket (Grange) Baptist

This year's Coronavirus has caused a great deal of disruption to the community, including Baptists in Queensland through

cancellation of services and dislocation of ordinary local church life. But back in 1919 when the "Spanish Flu" hit, it was a bit different. At least one church building, Newmarket (now Grange) was actually officially opened with all the usual ceremonial right at the height of the epidemic.

The Flu was rampant in Queensland from early May into June and early July, with the first death (outside quarantine) being recorded on 8 May; restrictions began to be lifted in mid-July (with various dates at different locations across the state). The state had managed to stave off the incursion of the disease for three months or more while it rampaged down south. And of course it had been decimating populations overseas for months before that. Our neighbours, South Africa and New Zealand had been hit particularly hard.

The Flu first appeared in Melbourne on 9 or 10 Jan 1919, but the government there messed up its handling of the situation by not declaring it under the terms of an agreement reached in a conference of the states and the Commonwealth in November 1918. This agreement required states with the disease to close their borders immediately. But in this case, the disease had escaped into NSW and SA before Victoria took action. As soon as the first official cases were announced in Queensland on May 2, (the initial patients were civilians from a military hospital at Kangaroo Point), borders were closed and a quarantine post was set up on the interstate rail line at Wallangarra where people had to wait a week before proceeding (at their own expense!).

The sudden closure of the borders created lots of



Wallangarra Quarantine Camp (State Library)

"stranded Queenslanders" as they were called. There had already been some cases of the flu at the Commonwealth quarantine base at Lytton but they had been well contained despite fears of people living locally.

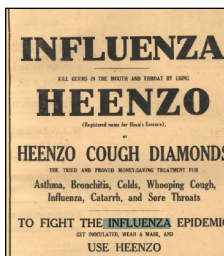
The only way the disease could reach Australia was by ships so they had been watched very closely. Many ships were carrying soldiers returning from Europe after World War I so the risk was high. Strict quarantine procedures (a federal responsibility) were developed. But the states, especially Queensland also depended on coastal shipping so there was great danger of the Flu spreading once it arrived. Rail travel was also another potent means of transfer.

But even so, even when the disease was spreading in Queensland, many activities continued to be held. Schools, for example were closed in the metropolitan area, but in the country there were race meetings, country shows and other events still taking place, including gatherings to celebrate the recently signed and highly welcome peace treaty. So there were hot spots, one of which was the Maleny where it was reported that Baptist services had to be cancelled for some weeks.

There was a high mortality rate and the disease could come on people very suddenly. Within hours a person could go from healthy to seriously ill and then death, often in horrific circumstances. Not much was known about the disease and at first it was often confused with "ordinary flu" which was widespread as well. It was usually called "pneumonic influenza" but then just "influenza" to distinguish it from "ordinary influenza". Bed rest was the only treatment, apart from aspirin to deal with pain (often prescribed in dangerously high doses). It was highly infectious and attacked adult men in particular. Many health workers became victims. Suicides were not unknown. Even in ordinary times, medical services were poor for most Queenslanders, so purveyors of "patent medicines" saw an opportunity to make their fortunes!

There were nearly 1000 deaths in Queensland, with over 300 in the Brisbane area. The population of the state was then about 712,000. (Deaths from all causes during the year were 8,856.) The overall death rate increased by nearly 20% in 1919 over the previous year, but this was not quite as much as in 1884 when dysentery and typhoid caused a 22% jump.

Churches were impacted by the situation. The official regulation issued on 9 May stipulated that unlike other public activities such as theatres, gyms and schools, churches would not be closed. Services could continue provided they were shortened to 45 minutes (so there is a silver lining to every cloud!) and social distancing was observed. They could also be held in the open air



without restriction. (There is no record of churches removing roofs to comply—some theatres did offer!). The situation with Sunday Schools was different – confusion is the simplest word to use! The main limitation on church activities seemed to be support. Churches did what they could to keep going, but many events such as anniversaries and picnics were cancelled or postponed (sometimes more than once) due to lack of people being able to attend. But a huge combined churches peace service was held in the Domain on 6 July at which it was estimated 20,000 attended. There were massed bands, a 1000 voice choir and a full roll-up of civic, military and religious officials. The prayer of thanks for victory was offered by Rev W G Pope, minister of the City Tabernacle.

Caring for the sick and their families became a high priority. Women's organisations stepped up to the mark, especially in very needy areas such as Spring Hill, providing food, in-home care and comfort. This was a dangerous and brave ministry with the City Tabernacle and the local Presbyterian churches performing magnificent service. An official community organisation, the Women's Emergency Corps, was set up with government support to patrol streets searching for needy people, offering support with visitation and meals, and assisting in the hospitals. Baptist women's groups either participated in this group or did what they could locally.

Overall, official response was muddled. Australia and Queensland had plenty of warning about the disease compared with the rest of the world, but the response was bungled. There was political wrangling at state and federal levels with Queensland even taking the Commonwealth to court over quarantine matters. The situation was not made any easier because of prolonged drought and extended maritime strikes that left North Queensland in particular in dire need of food. Australia was also far less united socially in the latter days of the War. Thankfully, Australia experienced a far less virulent form of the flu that the rest of the world and recorded the lowest levels of impact. This was even more so for Queensland.

Yet Baptist records show surprisingly few references to the epidemic. There is no mention of the flu in the Executive or Council records for the entire year, although the press reported that the Executive had a serious discussion at its May meeting! There was no state Baptist paper at the time, but the *Australian Baptist*, which usually gave fair coverage to state news, did record a few flu related matters, such as the deaths of three in one family at Rockhampton and a death at Taringa. Albion was disappointed it had not been able to arrange a welcome home service for its returning soldiers; it had also needed to cancel its Sunday School anniversary. At Canungra, the school had been used as a makeshift "hospital" so the Baptist church hall was taken over for the school. At the national level, the biggest impact was probably the cancellation of the conference of state Baptist Unions about the possibility



Canungra Baptist Church

of forming a national body; this move was regarded by some as disappointing and by others as extreme! Conferences were held in 1922 and 1925 and the Federal Union established 25 August

1926.

The reports for the Queensland Annual Assembly held a few months after the epidemic waned actually show a better financial situation than the previous year but otherwise there were only a few minor concerns—such as the Home Mission noting some churches were behind in their contributions, the President was unable to complete his visitation of the northern churches and a missionary event had to be cancelled. The Women's Union had not been able to hold their meeting for a few months. As well as Newmarket, at least two other church buildings were underway including one nearby at Everton Park. Overall, it seemed that the denominational year had been positive! One of the big features of the Assembly was a paper by Mr L C Morris, head of Technical Education in the state, on "The church's relation to social and national rest" resulting in vigorous discussion.

The other notable action was a motion congratulating the Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, on his safe return to Australia after participation in the 1919 Peace Conference at Versailles. Moved by the chair, Rev W G Pope, it was worded in extravagant tones, praying that "Almighty God may grant him health and strength to pilot the Commonwealth out of the perplexities of industrial unrest and turbulent disloyalty into the desired haven of a steady, quiet, and resolute life in which Constitutional government shall be upheld, the British Empire, and the highest material, moral and spiritual welfare of the people of the Commonwealth pursued." Hughes won the 1919 election held in December.

But silence about the influenza epidemic is not unusual. Historians point out that the epidemic seemed to fade from the memory quickly even though the personal, social and economic impact was enormous. Later historical accounts covering various aspects of Queensland life hardly mention the catastrophe, if at all. It seems as if the event was just too difficult to cope with. Perhaps people did not talk about it, but just coped as best they could having already endured so much during the war years. That is what seemed to dominate at the City Tabernacle: even though their ladies had done such a good job caring for the needy at the height of the epidemic, their annual report for the following year only looked back to "the aftermath of the war", and generally the effects of sin on the world.

This is a strange phenomenon. But if this devastating episode had been remembered better, perhaps lessons could have been learned so that a century later, we would have been better able to cope!

## Queensland Baptists 2005-2020 - A movement in flux

By David Parker

15 years ago we published our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of Baptists in Queensland, *Pressing on with the Gospel*. A lot has happened since then, so now is a good time for an update.

The good news was that in 2005 the Archives moved into the newly opened Gaythorne property, acquiring excellent facilities for the first time. It has developed strongly over the years with a great team, and now offers a top-rate service.

The Gaythorne site was opened on 4 September 2005 by Rev David Coffey, one of his first engagements as President of the Baptist World Alliance. This property provided large new headquarters building for the Baptist Union, its fifth location since dedicated offices were first acquired in 1960 at 345 Ann Street. In time, the \$3 million Gaythorne property (plus refurbishment costs) became financially viable, and was fully paid off in 2019.

Most departments welcomed the change to the commodious new facility, but it was a completely new day for the college—it was now no longer residential, it was co-located with the rest of the Baptist Union operations, and it also changed its name to Malyon College (currently Malyon Theological College), honouring the founding principal.

A small full-time faculty assisted by several part-timers cared for about 50 full-time students. Led by its Council, and in its new 3-level building, it was able to develop its tuition which has since gone on-line, enhance its academic status, enlarge its faculty, and offer courses up to doctoral level. Many students are now distance or part-time. Several specialist units have augmented its regular programmes.

A second training unit, Calam (then The Training Collaborative TTC), based originally at Townsville, provided TAFE level courses. After rapid expansion working with many local churches and numerous outside organisations—even interstate, it has since re-focused, working intensively with Baptist Union entities instead. Now located at Gaythorne, it is known as Malyon Vocational Training.

Statistically there has been growth over this 15-year period, from 177 churches with a reported membership of 11,244 (this figure is very rubbery!) to about 200 churches—very diverse in nature, with a total membership of 17,700. One report noted a growing trend towards more larger churches (now 20+ with over 200 members), more smaller ones (nearly 90 under 50), and fewer middle sized.

The biggest growth has been in multi-cultural churches, numbering 50 groups, covering 15 languages, with some churches very large. There have been many church plants (not all survived) and many mergers, re-locations and churches with multiple sites; many

churches have changed names to project their ethos rather than their location.

There are about 450 ministers (including about 30% retired), up about 23%. They work under a new rigorous recognition system focused on “registration” rather than ordination (still men only). The number of baptisms reported has remained unchanged at around 800.

Mission to Queensland (MTQ), established in 1981 to plant churches in remote and mining areas, now sees itself as a catalyst encouraging existing churches to plant new ones. A recent initiative encourages new models including “simple”, multi-campus and “hybrid” churches.

Direct financial support of the Baptist Union by churches is around \$900,000—an increase of only about 20% despite significant inflation and numerical growth. Extra funds to make up the annual budget, more than \$3.3 million, are supplied from the Gaythorne property, camping, care ministries and Baplink. Some of these groups struggled in the early 2000s seriously impacting the work of the denomination, as did the GFC.

Queensland Baptist Care changed its name to *Carinity* (care+affinity) in 2013 and turned 70 in 2019. It is now a state-wide operation employing more than 1,300 people, with 11 residential aged care sites, 5 retirement villages, 5 schools, and various services for disabilities, young people, in-home care and families, as well as many institutional chaplains. Having recovered from malicious unfounded attacks on its integrity in recent years, it has developed new properties and is refurbishing/rebuilding older units. Like other similar organisations, it faces serious challenges in the future.

Camping (QCCC) has also seen major changes since difficult days at the beginning. It works extensively with schools in outdoor education hosting more than 50,000 guests annually. Its three sites (down from 5 originally), including the former college property at Brookfield, are all in popular demand. The premier site at Mapleton recently added an indigenous component, while adventure camping is also a prominent feature. The operations are based on strong theoretical foundations related to the “Triple Mandate” of Scripture.

Administratively in 2005, the denomination was bedding down a new system arising out of reforms of the late 1990s focused on the Board and General Superintendent, supported by Regional Consultants and other entities governed by councils. The role of President, in place since 1877, was last filled in 2009 and abolished soon after—the inevitable result of the decision 20 years earlier to make the General Superintendent the spiritual leader of the denomination.

Increased Government regulation in areas such as financial accountability and child safety has severely

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