

# Connections

October 2020 Issue



**INSIDE:**  
*Riding the COVID wave*  
**Young Life and  
the Uni Student**  
Meet the interns

### Re-imagining Young Life and the future

**T**hank you for standing with us again through the 2019-2020 financial year. No matter your role or level of involvement, it is the people who make Young Life Australia. I want to thank you, along with our volunteers, donors, supporters, staff, committees and national board who have all made a significant contribution throughout this challenging year.

After ten years of sustained growth, I was expecting more of the same. Who could have predicted what was in store? With our nation's worst bushfire season on record and the global COVID-19 crisis, life changed for us all.

The impact upon our young people has been significant. Research is showing this will have ramifications for many years as they navigate shifts in education, work, health and social engagement.

I was impressed with the courage and determination staff and volunteers displayed in dealing with the crisis. It was time to re-imagine what caring



*Young Life Australia's executive team, Mark Stretton, Glyn Henman and Meera Seemampillai.*

for young people looked like. A national weekly InstaClub, Zoom hangouts and a Discord hub where leaders and young people could connect safely online were set up within weeks.

We will continue to live out Young Life's vision to be positively impacting Australian young people for Christ with the resultant transformation of the wider community. Our young people need to know we are here for them and they are important. They need to know we care about their future.

Ephesians 3:20 reminds us that God can do anything – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us. (The Message)

Young Life Australia will continue to re-imagine ministry in the presence of COVID-19 believing – if we wait until things return to normal, we will miss the opportunities that are before us.

### Chairman's Report

with Mitch Broom

**S**ince becoming involved with Young Life almost 15 years ago, I have always loved our mission: to build confidence, values and resilience in young people through significant relationships with adults who model the love of Jesus Christ.

We have always approached the mission with confidence because we have assurance in who stands with us. Jesus has promised He is with us, and will be with us, always. But over the past year, we have faced great challenges to the way we operate as an organisation; as an employer; a mission; a community of volunteers and believers, and as God's family.

It is not without careful stewardship that an organisation such as ours can survive such turbulent times. I look back over my last eight years on the Board, and see how God has been preparing us for these challenging moments. Jesus has been with Young Life in providing us with our people.

*As our programs start to return in many states around Australia, we can be confident of our ongoing stability as an organisation.*

When Llew Morris retired at the 2019 AGM, the organisation was left in great financial shape. I want to thank Llew for his part in achieving this. This, together with Government support, has largely carried us through the pandemic. The finance team, led by Meera, have done a fantastic job at getting their feet under the table quickly. Government support programs have taken care and precision to be implemented quickly, and the team have kept the Board updated regularly. I sincerely thank them for their hard work.

Our staff and volunteers, led by Glyn and Mark, have continued to rally together. Their resilience has seen them develop innovative ways of connecting with young people.

It has been exciting to see new opportunities arise and for the



imagination of our staff to add a new chapter to our field manual.

As we hopefully approach a period of relative stability, and our programs start to return in many states around Australia, we can be confident of our ongoing stability as an organisation. Our people are bouncing back and we are focused on building deeper connections within our local communities and building strong foundations for further growth.

Our local areas are the heart of the mission, and our donors keep it beating. On behalf of the Board and all our staff and volunteers, thank you for supporting us.



It's been a year of tremendous challenges but we are very proud how the staff and volunteers have shown great resilience and adaptability and extremely grateful for our supporters and donors who have stood with us during this difficult year.

Young Life staff and volunteers operate in 15 communities within Australia and two overseas. At year end, we were employing 40 staff including three full-time and 37 part-time. Our staff are supported in their work by 400 adult volunteers who assist in a range of roles from serving on committees to leading youth activities. Our volunteers are registered and have been cleared to work with children through the child protection process in each state and territory.

## Performance Measures

September 2019 saw a significant change in our organisational structure bringing on Mark Stretton as the National Field Operations and Training Manager which has resulted in valued unity amongst our field staff and national office team. This has driven our staff to support one another in working to achieve accurate reporting, intentional consideration of area finances and new ways of gathering a strong support base around each local team.

Areas which grew their income by more than 20% year-on-year were Dubbo, Barossa and Macedonia. Fundraising efforts for the end of financial year were thwarted due to COVID restrictions however many faithful givers continued to help areas in the mission.

Young Life Australia's presence in South Australia is set to grow with a new area in Port Adelaide being established in July.

Jobkeeper has been an incredible blessing. We have been recipients of both Jobkeeper and ATO tax offsets from April 2020 which helped us meet our operational expenses while regular fundraising events had to be cancelled.

I wish to thank my predecessor Llew Morris who handed over the reins in September 2019. His 15 years of service has contributed to where we stand today.

## Income

Income from Donations totalled \$1,082,011 in 2019-20. This is the largest component of income representing 63% of income and is the result of national and local fundraising efforts and activities in the communities in which Young Life Australia operates.

Camping income saw a significant reduction due to the cancellation of Summer Camp, \$59,249 versus \$169,768 in 2018-19.

## Finance Report with Meera Seemampillai



Income from schools and fundraising for chaplains totalled \$164,047 which represents 9% of income and a decline of 43% compared to this time last year. Total income for 2019-20 was \$1,730,831.

## Expenses

Employment expenses of \$1,356,979 make up 76% of Young Life's expenses in 2019-20. This category includes restructuring costs from the previous year.

Camping expenses reduced by 56% to \$74,900 and fundraising expenses reduced by 66% due to the bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions. Total expenses in 2019-20 were \$1,795,222. The overall result was a loss of \$64,391.

Young Life Australia continues to strive for improved operational efficiencies and ranks highly on standard efficiency measures for charities. Less than one cent in each dollar of Total Income is spent on fundraising and less than 8 cents in the dollar is spent on administration.

TOTAL INCOME		\$1,730,831
63%	Donations	\$1,082,011
9%	Chaplaincy	\$164,047
3%	Camping	\$59,249
1%	Fundraising	\$15,743
18%	Government support (JobKeeper and Cashboost)	\$309,500
6%	Other	\$100,281

TOTAL EXPENSES		\$1,795,222
76%	Employment	\$1,356,979
4%	Camping	\$74,900
8%	Administration	\$136,523
1%	Promotion and advertising	\$20,798
1%	Fundraising	\$11,503
11%	Other	\$194,519
Surplus/Loss		-\$64,391



To see the full audited financial report you can go to our website and click on the Annual Report tab or search the ACNC website under Find a Registered Charity.

## COMING UP

**October 7-19**

Canberra Young Life Camp

**October 23-25**

Young Life New England Retreat

**To register and for more updates visit**

[younglife.org.au/events](http://younglife.org.au/events)

**Y**oung Life Australia's story in 2019-2020 can be divided into two chapters. From July to December in 2019, the organisation was reaching 1700 teenagers a month in Australia. It was a highpoint, having grown from 900 per month on average between July and December 2018. We had 10 Young Life Clubs and three Wyld Life Clubs meeting on a regular basis involving students from between 50 and 60 schools.

The Volunteers in Schools program was active in 25 schools with involvement across all ministries and programs from 133 volunteer helpers and 50 committee members.

By the time school returned in February this year, it was a very different scenario. The bushfires had devastated much of the eastern States, cancelling Summer Camp and leaving a big impression on our camping program numbers for the year. Then Australia recorded its first confirmed coronavirus case on January 25 and by March 25 international travel was banned and Australia's borders closed. The States and Territories began to close schools.



*The year began with local camps and holiday fun.*



*Hobart Club ran small COVID-safe activities.*

Face to face work with youth came to a halt in March only to pick up again in late June. Numbers are still low as the capital cities in New South Wales and Victoria are yet to come online due to hot spots and school closures still occurring.

But there has been ongoing work. On average Young Life teams have maintained their connection with 643 young people per month, mainly through Zoom clubs, Discord and small group catch ups. These numbers settled down to 455 per month as

schools resumed face-to-face teaching but kept the ban on external helpers and volunteers.

There have been bright spots – Young Life's online presence has grown as the team pooled their talent to bring about InstaClub.

On Facebook, followers grew 11.3 percent in the first half of 2020 with plenty of positive reactions to InstaClub and Young Life's Prayer Day for Youth. On Instagram, interest in InstaClub – featuring all of the Young Life leaders from right around the country

## Young Life lands in Port Adelaide

**A**ndrew Joppich is a long-standing volunteer and staff member of Young Life Barossa who is on the move with new plans for Young Life in South Australia. So we asked: "What makes you tick, Andrew?"

### Working with young people

Youth group for me – all through high school – was where I knew people cared about me. I saw it as really important. I got a job and moved on but I had those youth group friendships if I needed someone to talk to.

If you rewind a bit for a snapshot of me at High School – I was the High School bully. I was known as a bully and was an angry kid. I had been picked-on in Primary School and by High School I thought the best way to avoid that was to be the aggressor. My mindset was 'I have to protect me'. I needed status. I needed all these different things.

So even though I grew up in Christian family, I had heaps of challenges but I had people invest in me. People who

showed up in my life. I want that for other young people in our community. In fact, every young person in our community.

*I just see a huge need to provide young people with the care and support I was lucky enough to have growing up – when I was a hurting kid.*

### My wife Tessa

I met my wife Tessa through church and we've been married for four years. Tessa is pretty incredible. She works at Lutheran Community Care, works hard recruiting foster carers. She has a business and marketing diploma.

Tessa is 100 percent behind my plan to



start up Young Life in Port Adelaide and will be helping out with the admin side while I am on the look-out for helpers and volunteers and raising funds.

### Bringing Young Life to Port Adelaide

My vision is to

see a new Young Life area established in Port Adelaide. Tessa and I live in Smithfield SA and it is a pretty intense area for young people but there is a lot being done for young people here. Port Adelaide is different.

Port Adelaide is going from industrial with run-down housing to having new estates being built. House prices are going up and rent rates are going up – I see people doing it harder and there's not a lot of help. There are a few church youth groups and mental health agencies but I just see a huge need to provide young people with the care





Easter saw YL Central West NSW deliver care packs.



Mike and Ben cranked out the games and skits for Insta Club.



Mr Robinson a.k.a. Anthony from YL Monash reigns on Insta.

– saw engagement triple. Twenty-five instalments later, InstaClub has been a fun, collaborative expression of the Young Life team's desire to share the moment with youth and to keep sharing the gospel.

Barossa Valley Young Life took the plunge and recorded their monthly youth event, Infusion, broadcasting it on YouTube and promoting on social media. For a small region they managed to make a big splash in April

with the premiere attracting 418 viewers. The project continued to attract 140–180 viewers each month.

As we are now well into the second half of 2020 the trend is for more activity. Being such a large country means South Australia, Tasmania, the ACT, Queensland and Central West NSW have low to no cases (at time of writing), and are once again running Club within COVID-safe guidelines while Sydney and Melbourne remain online.



Young Life Barossa Valley took Infusion online.

and support I was lucky enough to have growing up – when I was a hurting kid.

I've been talking to churches and potential volunteers, explaining Young Life's model and my best example comes from 1 Thessalonians 2:8 "Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well".

Young Life is as simple as that – meeting young people, sharing the love of God and our lives as well.

Connect with Andrew to hear more about Young Life in Port Adelaide at [andrewjoppich@younglife.org.au](mailto:andrewjoppich@younglife.org.au)

## Young Life and the Uni crowd

Young Life is launching a new program for university students in Armidale.

"The world has changed for young people in our community," says Mark Stretton, Young Life's Field Operations and Training Manager. "Seventeen and eighteen-year-olds are about to leave school and embark on tertiary education in greater numbers than ever before."

"Media reports say in NSW, 14,669 students have applied to start university in 2021, compared with 7824 at this time last year – and while Young Life has always involved Uni students as junior leaders, most of the youth move on from Young Life at that point."

"Our goal is to work with Uni students in the same way we work with high school age students – offering community, compassion and a clear picture of who Jesus is."

Mike Gaffney, who leads Young Life's International arm in the Asia Pacific, was the pioneer of what's known as Young Life College or Young Life University in the

United States and abroad.

"Young Life's vision for tertiary students grew from our conviction that if we could stay with our high school students for another year or two, it would help cement their faith."

"It will be exciting to see this develop from an Australian perspective and the International mission will be helping to kick start the project in Armidale with staggered funding over three years," he said.

Michael O'Kane is Young Life Australia's New England Area Manager. "The Armidale committee has been doing a bit of dreaming about how to carry forward the spirit which underpinned the purchase of our College and Community Centre. This seemed like a perfect fit."

"It will always be a home for Christian students studying in Armidale, as well as a place of academic, pastoral and ministry development and now the Young Life University program will add another dimension to life at the Centre," says Michael.



# Meet the INTERNS



▲ Tim Clarke

▲ Jonathan Bielenberg

When COVID-19 arrived in February 2020, Hawker Young Life Club had been running for 18 months and the local team were preparing to start a new Club in Melba, says Alex Lee, Area Manager in Canberra.

"Suddenly programs were at a standstill and I found myself doing something I really enjoy but often lack the time, which is training and developing people."

Alex began meeting with Canberra's recently arrived interns, Jonathan and Tim on a weekly basis.

"We focused on what makes Young Life unique and how a big understanding of the gospel applies not just to young people in the church – but to every young person in our neighbourhood."

"We worked on personal growth and bible knowledge and developing confidence around Young Life's approach, as well as the practical skills of presenting talks and organising programs for youth."

"I am very thankful for the chance to work in depth with Jonathan and Tim," says Alex.

"One day I would love to see a nationally funded internship program with a recognised qualification attached. That would be a fantastic commitment to training and development."



September saw Canberra back in action at Brekkie Club.

## Jonathan Bielenberg

I come from a military household and we moved around for a long time before finally settling in Canberra 12 years ago.

I'm greatly defined by my imagination. If I'm in a good book, I'm in another world, you can yell all you want, I won't hear you. I play Dungeons and Dragons, tabletop wargaming, and I love music. I'm also a black belt in Tae Kwon-Do which I have been doing for a decade.

I started Young Life in term two last year, and it quickly became as much a part of me, as Tae Kwon-Do and reading. Though club this year was waylaid, the internship has been everything I didn't know I needed. I am looking forward to applying it all and learning even more. I started up and have been expanding a Young Life Discord Server, which I hope will help kids connect with their leaders at any time, and I'm looking forward to taking kids to camp and starting to run even more activities.

I'm so glad to see club going back. I love what club has become for so many of them, somewhere safe, fun, and relaxing. I'm eager to continue expanding our work in Melba High. I went there for high school myself, and I know there are so many kids who would benefit.

## Tim Clarke

My name is Tim and I am an intern here in Canberra with Young Life under the supervision of Obi-wan Kenobi (Alex Lee). I am 22 turning 60, preferring to stay at home with my beautiful wife Katrina, who I married in January this year.

Katrina and I met through church and school, and we are both studying at the University of Canberra to be teachers. Outside of Young Life I work at both Telstra as a sales consultant and McDonald's as maintenance and delivery handler. As fun as those things are, when I'm not at any of my jobs I really enjoy going to the gym, where I train for Strongman and Powerlifting. Strongman is a fun sport which involves carrying big, heavy, awkward objects as quickly as possible. I like to lift and carry big heavy objects with my favourites being sandbags, rocks and my ego.

I started with Young Life just before the lockdown for COVID. This has meant we haven't had too much time with the kids but I am very keen to get back into the breakfasts at Belconnen High. I have had a great time going through the book of John in depth, learning how to be a disciple and what that looks like for interested school students.



## Stories from 2020

### Emma Stretton from Rockridge Canyon, Canada

Hi, my name is Emma, I am 18 years old and have been involved in Young Life since I was a kid. I love the ministry and all that it stands for. Young Life has been an awesome organisation to be involved with. I love the way in which the volunteers meet kids where they are at in life and love them no matter what. I have been a camper at Young Life camps twice and they were such awesome times that I will always cherish along with friendships that are still continuing!

This year I felt led to do Young Life in Canada after visiting with my family in 2016. My dad encouraged me to apply for a winter internship at Rockridge Canyon and I thought, 'What have I got to lose?' What originally was going to be three months in Canada turned into nine months and I absolutely love the country and the friendships I've made.

Although COVID-19 totally flipped my expectations upside down, God has provided in so many ways. He has been with me through homesickness, dealing with disappointment and grief and he has planted many seeds and provided so many friendships. The staff at Rockridge are incredible people.

## Far from home and still among the Young Life family



They have been so encouraging. Although it has been hard being away from home, the families here have supported and helped me. The way in which these Young Life people have sown into my life is beyond what I can

express. The fact that I have had this opportunity is awesome and I reckon if anyone is thinking of one day doing a gap year, I would definitely recommend an internship at Rockridge Canyon.

## Young Life helped me build a foundation



### Sam Lecons, from the Barossa Valley in South Australia

Young Life has been pivotal for forming the foundation that my life is built on.

I'm now 22 but when I was 14 I found Young Life in the form of Infusion where I have regularly attended for the past eight years. Not only did Young Life provide me with some awesome role models and friends to hang out with but they also gave me the opportunity to grow in some areas. For example, when I was 15 I became a member of the Infusion band where I was not only able to develop my drumming skills but also my organisational, decision making, problem solving and communication skills.

Soon after this I was given the opportunity to help out in other ways in the community by getting involved with leading, playing music, being involved with Club and developing and serving the community using my audio-visual skills. Ultimately though, the people at Young Life have helped build my faith and have helped teach me what it's like to live as a Christian and serve within the community. Today I love seeing and helping other young people to not only grow in their faith but also find out who they want to be.

## Please partner with us!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Day) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Evening) \_\_\_\_\_

### Please send me more information on:

- ☐ Becoming a monthly giving partner
- ☐ Volunteers in Schools
- ☐ Serving on a local YLA Committee
- ☐ Sponsor a teen to Summer Camp
- ☐ Praying for the work of Young Life Australia

### I wish to partner the work of Young Life Australia though financial support:

Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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- ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ One-off
- ☐ Cheque ☐ Direct Debit

Credit card type:

- ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa
- ☐ American Express

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

CARD NO.

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Expiry Date 

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

### We appreciate your support. It really makes a difference!

Please send completed form to: Young Life Australia  
PO Box 240, West Ryde, NSW 1685

Please make all cheques payable to Young Life.

Young Life Australia complies with all provisions of the Privacy Act. Be assured that the personal details you provide will be entered directly into the Young Life Australia database and will not be disclosed to any third party. We may use your details to send you information about the work of Young Life Australia. If you would like to know what information Young Life Australia has on you please call (02) 9877 5144 during business hours.

☐ Please do not send any further details about Young Life Australia



## Chaplaincy Report with Claire Wood

**Y**oung Life Australia has been a National Chaplaincy Program provider under the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) since 2007 when the program was introduced. Currently we have Chaplains and Student Wellbeing Workers serving in schools in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

The beginning of 2020 saw our NSW chaplaincy capacity struck in half with school funding being reallocated to accommodate for schools having not received funding previously. While this has disrupted the services and roles of many providers and chaplains throughout the state, other schools have been given the chance to explore chaplaincy in their midst. We've also been able to taken on a couple of new schools, which is exciting.

Our chaplains and student wellbeing workers seek to uphold the welfare component of school life by providing holistic care and support to students, staff and parents and complement other support services such as counselling to address emotional and mental health, and student engagement in the school environment.

Chaplains meet with students on demand or on referral and deliver a

variety of values-based programs according to needs within the school – these range from anti-bullying, self-esteem and identity issues, to anger management and resilience-based wellbeing programs: teaching young people through positive relationships during lunchtime groups and games, through a coffee cart experience or more personal one-on-one support. Chaplains also get involved in delivering information and training programs for parents on family, adolescent and child-rearing issues.



*YL Ipswich celebrated the easing of restrictions with a hike to White Rock.*

It's been an interesting year for sure when it comes to supporting and encouraging students across Australia and our chaplains and student wellbeing workers have gone above and beyond to help build young people up in their confidence, resilience and values.

## Council grant win for leadership program in Ryde

Young Life Ryde was recently awarded a grant by Ryde Council for a program that helps Year 12 prepare for the future.

"We want Year 12 students to look forward to next year and all of its potential, even though this past year has been challenging," says Ben Hura, Ryde Area Manager.

"It will be a great experience and a chance to find out what it's like to be a volunteer and work as part of a team."

If you are in Year 12 and you'd like to know more, please contact [benhura@younglife.org.au](mailto:benhura@younglife.org.au).



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