

NOVEMBER 2024

FrontierNews

*Thank you for coming
together with joyful
hearts and hands*



Frontier Services
Standing with people in the bush



*In loving memory of Rev Gray Birch (1938-2024)
Former Bush Chaplain and National Director of Frontier Services*

Acknowledgement

Frontier Services acknowledges the sovereign First Peoples on whose lands and waters we live, meet, and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to all descendants of these Nations who have cared for this place since Creation.

About Frontier Services

We are Australia's oldest bush charity, and we are here to help people living on the land. Through the generosity of our supporters, we provide practical, pastoral, and spiritual help to people in rural and remote areas of Australia.

You can help bush communities today and into the future.

- ✓ Make a tax-deductible gift by completing the donation form on pages 11 and 12 of this magazine, or donate online at frontierservices.org/donate
- ✓ Register to volunteer and check out our current volunteering opportunities in areas of most need at frontierservices.org/outback-links
- ✓ Leave a lasting legacy by including a Gift in your Will to Frontier Services. To learn more, visit frontierservices.org/bequest



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Share your story

If you have a story relating to our work that you would like to share, email us at team@frontierservices.org

Message from the National Director



I am filled with gratitude for everyone who shares our mission – and that includes you.

To the incredibly generous people who donate with such kindness to our vital services, and to the selfless volunteers who give their time, skills, and energy: thank you, on behalf of everyone you help in remote Australia, for your care and compassion.

On any given day, you could be making it possible for someone to visit people in isolated areas and help dig a hole for fence posts, or cook dinners to go in the freezer, or be there for someone who needs a shoulder to cry on. You could even be guiding the way for someone to lead a prayer of praise and gratitude.

In this edition of Frontier News, you'll find stories about many of these profound acts of kindness, and you'll see how you are there in all of it, making it possible, fuelling our work with your love.

I've dedicated this edition to Rev Gray Birch who was our National Director from 1986 to 1991.

Gray lived a life of service to others both personally and professionally. As an ordained Minister, a Bush Chaplain, and of course, a national leader of Frontier Services, Gray's legacy will continue to inspire and guide us.

I hope the rest of the year brings you joy and fulfilment. If we're not in touch before then, I wish you and your loved ones a very happy, healthy, and safe Christmas and New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Floyd".

Rob Floyd
National Director



Remembering Rev Gray Birch

Rev Gray Birch is fondly remembered for his profound contributions to outback Australia and his dedicated service as an Australian Inland Mission (AIM) padre. Known for his quiet determination and passion for justice, Gray's influence touched government officials, mining leaders, and outback communities alike.

In 1970, at the request of Rev Fred McKay, Gray and his wife Ros moved to Karratha WA, where Gray's industrial relations background enabled him to work with managers and employees of the various mining companies in the Pilbara.

Gray's ministry went beyond the church, as he worked tirelessly to address the needs of families living in harsh conditions. His ability to quietly assess and meet the region's challenges became a hallmark of his ministry.

Gray's long-standing connection to Frontier Services grew from his early days as an AIM padre. His leadership continued to flourish when he became Secretary of Frontier Services in 1985. Under his guidance, the organisation expanded, launching new projects each year to meet the evolving needs of outback communities.

Gray's work earned him widespread recognition, including being named in the Order of Australia in 1990. His legacy was further honoured by the

naming of Birch Place in Karratha, a testament to his impact on the town and its people.

Rev Gray Birch's life was one of quiet service and deep commitment, ensuring that remote communities were not forgotten. His legacy continues to inspire those who follow in his footsteps in the outback today.

"Frontier Services does not take Christ to the outback. Christ is already there. We are there to point out Christ's moving presence."

- Rev Gray Birch





Thank you for helping people like Donna

You've been there for our most vulnerable through some of their toughest times.

We recently asked our community to help people in rural and remote areas who experience domestic violence, and you responded with an outpouring of kindness.

Donna* was helped by one of our Bush Chaplains, after facing many incidents of horrifying physical and emotional abuse from her ex-partner. Your generosity has helped make it possible for our Bush Chaplains to support more women like her.

In the outback, help is often far away. Neighbours can't hear you, police can't turn up quickly, and the isolation can make an already terrible situation feel impossible.

Plus, in small towns, the stigma and fear of judgement can make many people feel trapped.

For some women in remote areas, their Bush Chaplain is the only person they can trust to confide in and their only source of support.

Donna says, "Knowing there are people who care enough to help is a big relief, and it really does make a difference."

Your generous donations make it possible for our Bush Chaplains to offer practical, emotional, and spiritual support to people going through hard times in isolated communities. Thank you for your continued support.

**Name changed to protect privacy*

“Farmers are doing it tough out there”

Meet the Outback Links couple who volunteer and can turn a hand to anything, and they say you can do the same.



Ranford and Julia at one of the many properties they've supported over the years

They have given more than 750 hours of volunteer work, repairing structures, sorting out the plumbing, servicing machinery, and leading a team. Bringing a wealth of experience and skills from a wide variety of careers, they are well equipped to support farmers doing it tough.

“God has blessed us amazingly in our lives. So whatever we can do to help others, that's what we do. We just love it.”

Ranford and Julia are inspired by Rev John Flynn's approach of 'meeting people where they are' in remote Australia, and helping with whatever they need.

“We help people with whatever their need is at the time. Sometimes it's just to be a listening ear.

“We are guided by God to tell us where to go. Sometimes we don't know why we're sent to some places, but once we get there, within days, we know exactly why God sent us and how we can help.”

Ranford and Julia often volunteer alongside other couples. But for their first trip with Outback Links, it was just the two of them. They went to Queensland in 2017, when the drought had been raging for five years.

"The property was an hour away from the nearest small town. Very remote. The farmer was by himself.

"His wife worked several hundred kilometres away and rang him for a chat every night. Checking in is very important for farmers living in remote areas."

In the time they were there, Ranford and Julia transformed the place. They did a complete kitchen reno, put in new windows, made curtains, branded cattle, patched the roof, and cleaned.

They returned a year later to fix the tack shed that was blown down in a storm.

"Between my wife, the farmer, and I, we built a shed to house his tractor and another vehicle, plus all his tack for the horses.

"Julia said to him, 'Let's call this new building the Ark.' The farmer said, 'It's not going to rain. It hasn't rained for six years.'

"The second last day we were there, it absolutely bucketed down with rain."

Greatly encouraged by their first Outback Links placements, Ranford and Julia set about gathering a team to tackle larger projects for remote farmers over the past six years. Their last placement was a bit different, bringing a small team to work alongside Bush Chaplain Jennie in Birdsville during the Big Red Bash.



Ranford using his welding skills

Anyone can volunteer

While Ranford and Julia, and many of the Outback Links volunteers are handy on the tools, they wish more people knew that you don't need special skills to volunteer.

"Any small thing you can do makes a difference. You could just mind the farm for a few days and feed the chickens while someone's in hospital. You could paint a room or hammer a nail into a piece of wood. You can garden and tidy up.

"Whatever you give will be greatly appreciated."



Ranford volunteering for a Great Outback BBQ in Birdsville

A flood ripped through his house

Thank goodness for kindness like yours



Bush Chaplains and Outback Links volunteers continue to provide practical and emotional support to people in outback communities when they need it most.

When our Bush Chaplain met Matt* at the pub after a sudden deluge of rain, Matt had no idea what he was going to come home to or how he would cope.

The flood seemed to come out of nowhere. It spared the properties on either side of Matt's house, but poured straight through his back door. It destroyed his floors, furnishings, the whole front and back yards, and all the pipes and plumbing. Matt was left with no toilet, no kitchen, and a house full of mud and muck.

Thanks to the kindness of people like you, our Bush Chaplain was able to assist with immediate, practical

support. They gave him gift vouchers so he could purchase essentials to get through the first tough nights.

Then, they got on the phone. They organised two Outback Links volunteers who were in the area to come straight away to help Matt clean out the worst of it.

Then our Bush Chaplain organised sheets and towels, and emergency groceries to replace the ruined food. And, for the longer term, they helped him navigate Centrelink to finally get disaster recovery support. Matt didn't have internet, so a laptop with a hotspot was a godsend.

Our Bush Chaplain praised the local community saying, *"Bush Chaplains don't work in isolation – we're part of a community."*

**Name changed to protect privacy*



Fostering justice, equality, and unity for all

We recently attended the 17th Assembly meeting of the Uniting Church, a meeting of representatives which only occurs every three years.

More than 200 members from around the country came together in Sydney to agree on a future where unity is celebrated, diversity is cherished, and Christ's threads of love crosses boundaries.

Our Bush Chaplains Benji Quilliam, Jill Doolan, and David Jackson were among those who travelled far to attend this important event.

While our Bush Chaplains were in town, we were blessed to meet some of our closest friends from the area,

including supporters and Outback Links volunteers. Supporters like you from across Australia and our Bush Chaplains are partners in achieving our mission, and it was wonderful that we could meet, chat, and get to know each other and every one of you.



Interested in joining supporter events? Register at frontierservices.org/events

Give a Gift of Hope this Christmas

Instead of gifting your loved ones a physical present this Christmas, why not give a Gift of Hope, to provide much needed care and comfort to people in the outback. You'll receive a beautiful e-card for your loved one, representing a gift that helps people in need.



A cuppa and a chat \$50

The gift of a Bush Chaplain's presence and listening ear



Mend a fence \$100

Make repairs on damaged homes and farming stations



Fill a tank \$250

Help Bush Chaplains cover the distance to reach those who need it most



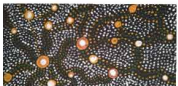
The gift of mateship \$__

Show people doing it tough in the bush that they are not alone

Send a Christmas card with the Aussie spirit

Choose from three card packs containing unique artworks inspired by the outback. All proceeds go to programs supporting people in remote Australia.

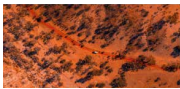
Julia's Paintings



Three Wise Men



Red Dirt Pack



Order your Christmas Cards and Gift of Hope cards Online

Visit frontierservices.org/shop or scan the QR code.



Yes, I will support our sisters and brothers in rural and remote Australia.

One-time donation

I wish to make a donation of:

\$30 \$75 \$100 Other \$ _____

Outback Angel

I wish to become an Outback Angel and make a monthly donation of:

\$30 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Gift of Hope cards

I would like to place an order for:

Type of card	Order quantity	Gift amount	Total amount
<input type="checkbox"/> A cuppa and a chat	_____	\$50	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Mend a fence	_____	\$100	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fill a tank	_____	\$250	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> The gift of mateship	_____	Your choice	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I would also like to add a donation to my purchase			\$ _____
Grand total			\$ _____

Christmas cards

I would like to place an order for:

Name of pack	Order quantity	Price/Pack of 10	Total amount
<input type="checkbox"/> Three Wise Men	_____	\$8	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Red Dirt	_____	\$8	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Julia's Paintings	_____	\$8	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I would also like to add a donation to my purchase			\$ _____
Grand total			\$ _____

Please write your payment and delivery details overleaf.



I wish to pay by

Credit card. Please debit my: VISA Mastercard Amex

Card Number

Expiry Date

Name on Card

Signature

Cheque / Money Order made payable to Frontier Services

Direct deposit / Bank transfer

Account name: **Frontier Services**

BSB Number: **032-014**

Account number: **116430**

Reference: _____

Please write the Reference you used to help identify your payment.

Please fill out your details, even if you have donated previously:

Supporter Number (if known) _____

Title

First Name

Last Name

Address _____

Suburb

State

Postcode

Phone / Mobile _____

Email _____

I am a member of _____ congregation. (If applicable)

Please return this form to **PO Box A2266 Sydney South NSW 1235** or you may:

 Donate online **frontierservices.org/donateFN**

 Call **1300 787 247**

Thank you for standing with people in the bush.

Your personal information is collected to enable us to provide you with news, and a receipt for donations. You can request to have your details or contact preferences changed at any time by phoning 1300 787 247. To read more about how Frontier Services uses your information, please visit frontierservices.org/our-privacy-policy



Children in the bush face social exclusion

Almost half (48%) of Australian children living in regional communities face a high or very high risk of social exclusion, according to a recent report from UnitingCare Australia.

The index used in the report measures social and material disadvantage, which affects children's ability to participate in and feel connected to their communities.

We asked our Bush Chaplains on the ground to tell you more about the situation in outback Australia.

Bush Chaplain Jennie Feldmeier

"Children living on properties don't always access traditional schools.

Many have School of the Air, so they are online each day with their school mates and teachers. But they don't have face-to-face playtime with children their age.

"I spoke to a mother recently. She said the biggest challenge for her children is friendships. The children are home-schooled and don't get the chance to form and forge friendships."



When Jennie goes to visit, she is able to look after the kids if their parents need to work on the property.

Bush Chaplain Lindsay Ginn

"The local schools can have a high changeover of teachers and principals and there are staff shortages. Life is very tough in remote areas, and many teachers who come out here from the cities struggle to stay long term. If I didn't take a music program into these schools, the children would miss out on the opportunity to learn... or they would have to travel hundreds of kilometres just to access lessons."



The presence of our Bush Chaplains is essential in helping children overcome the disadvantages of social exclusion. With your help, Bush Chaplains can visit remote communities, schools, and properties to check in on them and bring much needed care and connection.

Scan the QR code to read the full report.



Better access to services - thanks to you!



(L to R) National Director Rob with Hawker resident Annett and Bush Chaplain Sunny

Hawker is a small community of only 340 people in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia, yet it has a huge spirit and significance.

It has become a vital meeting place for local residents and travellers alike. Until recently, however, not everyone could use the local services.

Due to its isolation and ageing infrastructure, people with disabilities or limited mobility struggled to get into places – including the church.

Thanks to you, a team of 21 Outback Links volunteers visited Hawker for five days of dedicated service, hard work, and high spirits.



Volunteers outside the aged care accommodation

"This effort showcases the heart of Outback Links," said Rob. "Our volunteers stepped in to ensure that Hawker's residents have safe and functional spaces, while sharing laughter, hope, and friendship with the locals."

Many of them travelled hundreds of kilometres just to lend a hand.

Led by Bush Chaplain Sunny Kadaparambil and National Director Rob Floyd, the team focused on making facilities in Hawker more accessible for its vulnerable residents.

Work included cleaning and oiling access ramps, repaving a walkway and tidying up gardens for elderly residents, and repairing local facilities.

In addition to the hands-on work, the group celebrated Sunny's 10th anniversary as a Bush Chaplain, marking a decade of compassionate care across the outback.

Thank you for making such practical and heart-warming work possible!



Sunny's 10th anniversary celebrations



Hawker resident Christina and Outback Links volunteers



Working together to pave a path to improve access for residents

For Bush Chaplain Noel, men's mental health isn't such a hard nut to crack



Men aren't inclined to talk about their feelings. That's a common issue. But this stereotype simply doesn't ring true in the experience of Barwon NSW Bush Chaplain Noel Williams.

Perhaps it's his personal history of grief at a young age, or maybe it's his four decades of experience as a Chaplain in the Defence Forces, but Noel says the men he comes into contact with are often very quick to open up and share what's on their mind.

"It's all about making a connection and listening - not only to what they are saying, but to what's actually sitting underneath that."

Promoting mental wellbeing is central to Noel's role. He understands the unique stressors

faced by rural and remote communities, where rates of self-harm and suicide increase with remoteness. Supporting a sense of overall wellbeing is integral to keeping men mentally healthy.

"I find that men can connect with a framework of wellbeing that looks at the emotional, social, spiritual, and physical," says Noel. "I often use mind mapping as a tool to help them articulate what's going on. It allows them to think strategically about the problem and to focus on solutions."

Noel runs regular group sessions across his ministry area and provides individual support to men who may be doing it particularly tough. He describes his role as guiding people through their

feelings and emotions, helping them find possible solutions.

"I call the main issues people deal with 'the 5 Ds': depression, desperation, divorce, dementia and death," says Noel. "Many men just want to make some sort of sense of what's going on, so we'll unpack that, and that process itself is often helpful."

Noel sees his work, and that of Frontier Services, as caring for the heart of Australia. He believes supporting mental wellbeing is core to 'Standing with people in the bush'.





Can you be their Outback Angel?

Outback Angels are a special group of Frontier Services supporters who give a kind donation every month to make an enormous difference.

Regular gifts give strength and certainty for our work.

We need more Outback Angels to protect our sisters and brothers living on the land. Will you join our team of Outback Angels?

"The regular ongoing gifts of Outback Angels allow us to plan further into the future and plan with confidence. Outback Angels protect our work and the people we serve from uncertainty," says Rob Floyd.

Be their Outback Angel today. Simply complete the form on Page 11 or go to **frontierservices.org/join-angels**

Continue Rev John Flynn's vision of a mantle of safety for people in the bush.

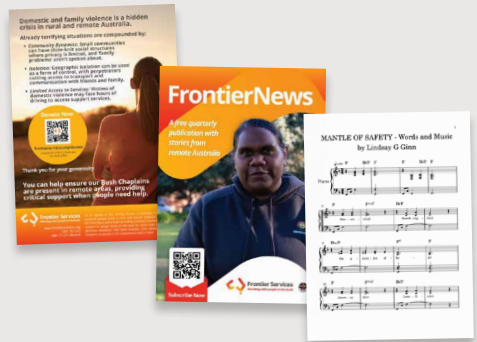
Want to spread the word in your congregation?

We have ready-to-go resources that make it easy for you to be part of this vital work to help our brothers and sisters on the land.

How your church can get involved

Visit frontierservices.org/congregations to download resources, including:

- Messages for your church bulletins and noticeboards
- Donation QR codes and prepaid donation envelopes (no need to collect or transfer donations)
- Print-ready posters and flyers
- Sheet music and songs recorded exclusively for Frontier Services



Burwood Heights shows how it's done!

Despite a chilly eight degrees and icy weather, Outback Links volunteer Lindsay warmed hearts at Burwood Heights Uniting Church with a special service and Great Outback BBQ.

Lindsay transformed the church into a wintery outback scene with a hay bale, folding chairs, road maps of Australia, and even a bushman's jacket. It felt like a cosy outback campfire in the midst of winter.

A huge thank you to Lindsay and Burwood Heights Uniting Church

for dedicating a church service to Frontier Services and for their generous donation to support our vital work.



Thank you for helping to bridge the distance all around Australia



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