

A Fragile State

The Commonwealth Government is providing financial and hands-on assistance for some neighbouring countries, which it calls 'Fragile States'. While this commendable action is happening, the government is also tightening its funding provisions for worthy but fragile Indigenous Australian programs such as ours.

The operation of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College depends on three funding streams:

1. Partner Church and agency funding for staff and operating costs
2. Government funding for student costs to attend residential studies
3. Internally generated funds such as course fees and book sales.

Funding from Qld Churches, the Anglican Board of Mission, Tear Australia and now the Bible Society has been the mainstay of Wontulp's operation over the years. Church funding in particular has not kept pace with increased costs, mainly due to the increase in staff needed to meet the extensive requirements to maintain the quality of our courses and registration as a Training Organisation. We face a substantial deficit this year from this funding stream.

Internally generated funding is quite limited. Students are making a good effort to meet course fees and many have deductions taken from Centrelink and CDEP income to do this.

Funding from the Commonwealth Government for student costs and a small operational assistance (SRA) has enabled the College to expand its programs and allowed hundreds of students to undertake leadership training in a supportive environment. Indigenous bishops, clergy and lay leaders have been trained through Nungalina and Wontulp Colleges under this funding support and now provide significant community leadership.

Students and staff at work



Diploma students with study resource books presented by MU Australia

The 4-year agreement for this funding (which comes via Nungalina College) ended at the end of 2004. A new funding agreement is not yet in place (mid-May) and this has meant cancellation of most residential programs for the first half of this year. The guidelines for the new agreement have been issued and they show that a significant reduction in financial support can be expected. The previous agreement was sufficient for students to attend 4 x 2-week residential study blocks in Cairns each year plus whatever study they could manage at home. This is called 'mixed-mode' study. The new agreement will mean that students must do about half of their studies at their home base to entitle them to attend half in residence.

This may sound fine, but it assumes that students have the literacy and study skills to handle home based study with limited support. Most of our students do not have these skills when they begin Certificate level studies. We provide a Literacy Tutor to help them gain these skills while they are studying. By the time they complete Certificate level, most have gained the skills to undertake home-based study for the Diploma level.

We risked bringing in the Diploma of Theology students for two blocks before funding is approved to get them started on the new basis. The group took up the challenge and 5 students are undertaking a full-time load so they can attend 4

residential blocks while another 8 are continuing on a part-time basis and will only be able to attend 2 blocks.

The College faces a much bigger challenge in meeting the needs of 80 Certificate level students in both theology and community development studies. Most of them will be disadvantaged due to low literacy and study skills. The pressures of community life also make isolated study difficult. The College must now find ways to strengthen its voluntary tutor support and do what we can for staff to visit students 'at risk' to provide teaching support, itself a costly task. We pray that the Government will come to see in time that extra funding support is needed to produce the next wave of Indigenous leaders in the communities we serve.

The Rev. David Thompson



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Graduations ...



During 2004 Wontulp-Bi-Buya College had seven students graduate with a Diploma of Theology, five with Certificate III in Theology, two with Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training (AWT) and one with Certificate III in Community Organising.

Pictured left are: Maryanne Savage (Cairns - Cert.III in Theology); Rev. Dalton Cowley (Bamaga - Diploma of Theology, & Cert.IV in AWT) and Coral Way (Rockhampton - Cert. IV in AWT)

The first residential study block for 2005 concluded with (l to r) William Mosby and Gladys Sailor receiving their Diploma of Theology and Wilson Billy receiving his Certificate III in Theology.

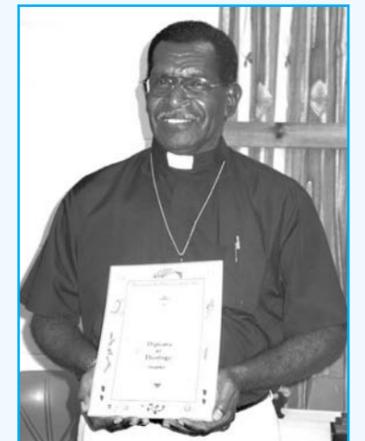


...and ordinations

Diploma of Theology student Rev. Yatamo Gela (not pictured) was ordained a Priest in the Anglican Church at Darnley Island in November 2004.



Students Azzie Noah (pictured right), John Noah (pictured above) and James Salee were ordained at Murray (Mer) Island just before Christmas 2004. Rev. Azzie Noah and Rev. James Salee received their Diploma of Theology in June. Rev. John Noah is Deacon in charge at Mer Island and Rev. Azzie Noah is Deacon in charge at the Aboriginal community of Pormpuraaw on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula.



WONTULP-BI-BUYA COLLEGE Inc. A Combined Church Indigenous Training and Research Centre and Qld partner of Nungalina College, Darwin, providing education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander church and community leaders. Wontulp-Bi-Buya means faith and light. Supported by the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches. PO Box 960N, North Cairns Qld 4870. Phone: 07 4041 4596. Fax: 07 4041 4597. Web site: www.wontulp.qld.edu.au

From the Principal

We have now completed more travel to the communities in which past and present students and tutors live. You may recall that in the last newsletter I wrote that we had visited the Peninsula and Gulf regions ending at Townsville. Well, this time my wife and I travelled throughout southern Queensland, south of Townsville. We first drove to Brisbane and then inland through Cherbourg and Woorabinda, coming back toward the coast and Rockhampton. Finally after some 4,000 km we arrived back in Cairns.

The students that we managed to meet were very pleased to see us and requested that the visits continue in a regular way. Some of the students were away on business, or so busy that I would have had to break the itinerary in order to see them. Our time was limited as we were visiting in between Residential Study Blocks in Cairns where students come for two weeks intensive study. We needed to return to Cairns in time for a Diploma residential block. In our travels we were always aware "we had to move on". Hopefully, in future, we will have the time to extend our stay even if only for another day, in order to meet present and past students and tutors.

We did manage to conduct one module of Bible Study at Woorabinda. Our sincere thanks to Fr Daniel Joyce, the priest in charge of the Anglican Community there. He travels the 360km return trip from Rockhampton each week to conduct services. He also transport students to the airport so they can attend study in Cairns.



The Principal visiting with Rev. Alex Gater and her husband Jeff and youngest daughter Faith.

Fr Joyce is a graduate of WBB College. A further blessing was the Roman Catholic Priest at Woorabinda who welcomed the offer of becoming a local tutor for the College.

Highlights of the trip were provided by Jeanette Brown of Indigenous radio in Cherbourg and Bill Thaiday of the Indigenous radio in Woorabinda. They allowed me generous airtime to discuss the College and explain the reason for our visits. The Lord richly Bless them and all who support this College.

Jesus is Lord
The Rev. Mick Connolly



Fr. Connolly at Cherbourg radio station with Jeanette Brown.

Below: Rev. Mick & Mrs. Val Connolly (far right) after a service in Brisbane enjoy a chat with (from left) Ms Louise Bartholomew, Ms McRose Elu (WBB Management Committee member) and Mr. Jimmy Baker.



The Lord's Prayer

Gnaree ba-beeng
Wonyal wahgannchibba
Gniooba gniece maroomba
Balka gnalleeba
Yaganna guallee noonam Tamana
Bayan woodya guallee-gannoo binggin
Wallee gnallee-gnanna Waleemal
Yandeegee gnallee-gnanna Waleenjee
Gnareeba nannam Cooroomba beera
Coobaggoolabba

As an Aboriginal Christian I believe this is one of the most important prayers that I have today. It is so special that we do not say the prayer as our everyday prayer, but only on special occasions.

This prayer belongs to the Quandamooka People (Moreton Bay), it was written around the time 1892-1907 and in their language Jandai.



Evelyn Parkin is a Diploma student as well as studying at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane.. She is also the Chairperson of the WBB Management Committee

I would like to honour my Mother Bethel Delaney, Great Auntie Bethel Murray and Auntie Rosie Borey with this prayer. My Mother did not have the opportunity to see this but she nurtured my religious life, as she did also with my older brother's and sister's. Along side of my Christianity and in her own way, she taught me about the spirituality of the bush, especially the silence that was all about us. I thank my Mum and Aunties for passing on their love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a literal translation of The Lord's Prayer from the Jandai language.

Our Father
Who stop up there
Your name is good
Come down to us
We do here what
they do up there
Today give us bread
Forgive us this time
Don't lead us to do wrong
Take us away from bad
You are great, all is yours.
Forever

First Indigenous Literacy Tutor



Ms Rose Go Sam (pictured left) is the first qualified Indigenous Literacy tutor at Wontulp. Rose received her BEd. at Queensland University of Technology and started at Wontulp in 2004. She took a 10 month break to give birth to her daughter. Understanding cultural nuances and being able to put vocabulary in an Indigenous context has been a definite advantage for Rose and the students.

Pictured with Rose is Rev. James Salee (Diploma of Theology graduate - 5/6/05) Rev. Salee whoresides on Murray (Mer) Island, in the Torres Strait, where he has already encouraged 8 Islanders to follow his footsteps and enrol at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College.

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