



**2019-2020**

# **Bible Society Australia Annual Review**







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THƯỜNG

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# A message from our Chairman

It is always a challenge to write a retrospective report, usually because there can be so many highlights. This year though, the period that this Annual Review covers has been clouded by an invisible enemy that has crippled the world. We will all remember the year 2020 as the time the world stopped, and a global pandemic made a mockery of many '2020 Vision' statements. International travel was almost non-existent. A killer virus spreading mayhem across every single community across the planet. Instead of despair though, we have been both challenged and uplifted to hear about how our partner Bible Societies have responded to COVID-19.

Of course, as Christians, we know that our hope is beyond this world, pandemic or not, and our assurance comes from God's word. The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans:

*"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

What a remarkable promise and how heartening are those words as our lives have been so dominated by this pandemic.

In this season the board had the privilege of appointing a new Chief Executive Officer to lead Bible Society through a new decade following Dr Greg Clarke's resignation last financial year. I acknowledged Greg's contributions at our 2019 Annual General Meeting. We are grateful for Grant Thomson's leadership of the organisation since October 2019, in particular as he has walked into the challenges of managing through this season.

Grant has announced our new vision for Bible Society which would no doubt have brought a smile to the faces of the very first council of the newly formed Bible Society in Sydney in 1817. Why is Bible Society Australia here?

**"To impact and influence Australia and the world by Opening The Bible to all people everywhere by all means possible."**



This is what motivates each board member also as we provide rigorous governance oversight to this 203 year old charity. I want to thank my fellow board members for their commitment to this important work and the sacrifices they have made to contribute. I am grateful for their prayers, their passion and their friendship. It is a privilege to serve the longest living organisation in Australia.

May God continue to bless the work of Bible Society, as there is still much to be done in getting God's Word translated and distributed to all the peoples of this world.



Anne Robinson AM  
Chairman, on behalf of the Board



**Bible Society Australia Board.** Pictured left to right: Ruth Limkin, Grant Dusting, Kate Harrison Brennan, Michael Harvey, Anne Robinson AM, Barry Morris, Sue Stott, Mark Schultz, David Carver

# From the CEO

It is a great privilege for me to present the 2019-2020 Annual Review for Bible Society Australia. I began in the role of CEO in October of last year and I want to acknowledge the work of my predecessor Dr Greg Clarke, who in 2011 became the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of the newly formed national organisation.

I am excited to take up the baton to lead this extraordinary organisation as I, like you, believe Bible Society has a unique place in Australia's history, but more than that, Bible Society also has much more work to do into the future.

For example, think about our neighbours in Indonesia. Over 600 languages and only 33 of those languages have been translated into full Bibles. There is a huge amount of work to do there.

We are part of a global fellowship, the United Bible Societies. In the latest United Bible Societies (UBS) Scripture distribution figures, the annual distribution of full Bibles has gone up from more than 34 million in 2015 to just short of 40 million in 2019. Together with the UBS, we are cooperating on significant timelines for translations, working across different languages and cultures. We provide support to enable our partners to do their job, to translate the Scriptures. For example, you will hear more about translation work in Vietnam, often undertaken by passionate local pastors, with demanding day jobs, and at night translating the Scriptures.

Here in Australia, Bible Society is committed to young people. We have a vision for a youth Bible. A new Christian's Bible. We are more and more intentional in the digital space, getting the word out to young people, via YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, ensuring all our digital platforms are mobile friendly as that's where we want to be reaching the next generation of Australia.

Bible Society is a family of brands coming under the headship of the Bible Society Australia Group. We encompass the Centre for Public Christianity (CPX), advocating in the public square for the gospel; Eternity, bringing the good news of Christianity to all who seek it; Koorong, equipping churches and individuals with Christian resources; and Acorn Press, publishing Australian Christian voices. Collectively we can help make a difference serving the church and building Australia.

It has not been an easy year for our brothers and sisters in the Lord both here in Australia and around the world, as communities have faced catastrophic climate events and a global pandemic.



Our vision is to impact and influence Australia and the world by Opening The Bible to all people everywhere by all means possible.

We will continue to follow this vision no matter what. Bible Society work is the work of our donors and supporters – you – and would not continue without you. We are so grateful for your ongoing support.

This review will report on some of the struggles our partners have experienced due to COVID-19 and we ask that you continue to pray for our work and the difficulties facing our partners and the communities they serve.



Grant Thomson  
CEO, Bible Society Australia



# 2020

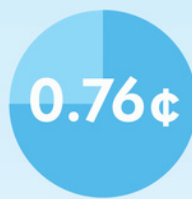


## A YEAR IN REVIEW

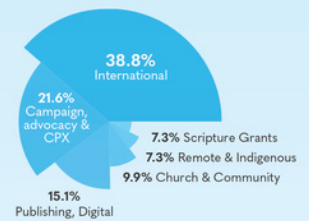
### TOTAL DONATIONS

**\$13,900,000**

### MISSION EXPENDITURE



of every dollar goes toward mission



### TRANSLATION

#### Australian Remote and Indigenous Ministry Support

From May-July 2020, the [aboriginalbibles.org.au](http://aboriginalbibles.org.au) website had 96,500 views of an Indigenous translation or downloaded a book of Scripture. Four more languages were made available on the website.

#### Vietnam

### The first draft

of Matthew, Luke, John (4-11), and Romans (3-11) in a **minority Vietnamese language** was completed.

### DISTRIBUTION

#### Nicaragua

**92,800 Bibles**

or Scripture portions given out to families of children with cancer and in hospital.

#### Iraq

**2,400 families**

received packages containing food, hygiene items, Bibles, and Scripture items.

#### China

**76,500 free Bibles**

given to the rural poor.

#### Australia

More than **455,000 Christian children's books** sold through Koorong.

**140,000+ Bibles** sold and distributed in Australia.

**80,000 new Bibles** printed through BSA Publishing.

Just under **150,000 pieces of Scripture** made available through BSA Scripture Grants.

Approximately **35,000 pieces of Scripture** went to Indigenous communities and ministry partners.

**254,000 Christmas little books** (*Who, What, Why, How of Christmas*) and **131,000 copies** of the little book, *Who, What, Why, How of Easter* given out.



**“As a pastor, I feel further enlightened with the techniques and Scriptural content of the training and I am looking forward to an enriched ministry and further training in the future.”**

Pastor John Liu, AOG Representative

# International

## COVID-19 Update

The impact of COVID-19 across the world has been far-reaching and devastating. This is particularly true for places where BSA-funded projects are located, often immersing already desperately disadvantaged communities into a new level of despair. Most of our partners' projects are suspended or operating at a reduced capacity. It has been our privilege to come alongside our partners to offer support and prayer during this time as well as funding for some emergency projects which were created in response to the COVID crisis. So far, BSA has been able to fund the following emergency projects:

### China

Bible Society is providing financial assistance to needy pastors in the Hubai province, where the capital Wuhan was the original epicentre of the outbreak. Due to the lockdown of the province and churches, these poor and disadvantaged pastors were not able to receive church offerings on which their livelihood depends. This project financially supports these pastors for 12 months so that they can continue in ministry and not be forced into alternative employment.

With only one pastor to approximately every 6,700 believers, it is vital that they can continue teaching and shepherding their congregations.

### Vanuatu

In April, a category 5 cyclone ripped through the South Pacific devastating parts of Vanuatu as well as Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands.

Some Vanuatu provinces were severely impacted, leaving more than 90% of people homeless. In partnership with Bible Society South Pacific, BSA is funding a **trauma healing project which trains local church and community leaders to be able to deliver trauma healing sessions** for people in their communities in a biblical, culturally relevant way. Participants are also connected to local churches for further support, spiritual growth and guidance.



### Zimbabwe

BSA has funded relief packages through an emergency project for mothers of disabled children in some of Zimbabwe's poorest communities. Life for these mothers is already desperately hard, but the extended lockdown means that most are unable to earn anything at all, as informal street stalls have been shut down. Bible Society have provided **80 families** with food packages, hygiene items, hand sanitiser, face masks and Bibles.

**"I would like to thank Bible Society and their friends for recognising the challenges we face as mothers caring for disabled children. The assistance which has been extended to my family is overwhelming... To those who have extended their hand to us, may God be with them."**

**Mrs E Musiyambiri.**



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# Translation

## Vietnam

The goal of this project is to complete the translation of the first New Testament in a minority Vietnamese language by 2023, in printed and electronic formats. The project has been proceeding well despite the outbreak of COVID-19.

The first draft of Matthew, Luke, John (4-11), and Romans (3-11) has been completed, as well as an internal review of Mathew and Luke. This project remains on schedule.

**“One of the translators was able to share some verses from this translation with his community for the first time. He read a verse to an elderly man while visiting him for his longevity ceremony. The man was so happy to hear the verse in [his language] for the very first time. One of the members in his family, who is not a Christian, listened and began to talk with the translator. He was very interested in the Bible and even apologized for the way he had treated the translator before. This story reflects our hope for making more relationships with the community and sharing Jesus through the project.”**  
Bible translator, Bible Society Vietnam.

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# Distribution

## **Nicaragua - *Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer***

Nearly 93,000 Bibles or Bible portions were given to parents and their children, who are hospitalised with cancer. The families were able to learn that God is loving, faithful and merciful. Bibles were also given to 125 doctors and nurses during devotional times lead by pastors and volunteers.

219 volunteers were recruited, trained in Clinical Pastoral Education for children and children’s psychology, and provided with a Bible. Sadly, 11 project volunteers have died from COVID-19 since March 2020.

Our support also covered the salaries of three qualified nurses to ensure the best possible care to children with cancer who are hospitalised and receiving treatment.



**"I remember one day crying while my child was sleeping, when I received a visit from volunteers of the Bible Society. They prayed for my child and for me, they encouraged me with words of faith and trust in God, and they gave us free Bibles. They helped me and motivated me to continue fighting for my child. Since then we are together fighting with the help of God."**

Marcial, a father whose son was diagnosed with cancer and is now in remission.

### **Iraq**

2,400 families received packages which contain food, hygiene items, Bibles and Scripture items. Bible Society obtained permission to distribute these relief packages in Iraq, even during the total lock-down of the country due to COVID-19. These packages have provided hope to traumatised families in Erbil, Ainkawa, Baashiqa, Koya and Baghdad.

One woman, on learning this support came from another Bible Society, in Australia, was overcome with emotion. "We thought we were forgotten," she said as she received the gift.

### **China**

Our partners in China have been able to distribute 76,500 copies of the Bible free of charge to the poor. They were also able to provide Bible paper to print nearly 1.14 million subsidised Bibles, which are sold at low cost.

**"It is very hard to find a Jingpo Bible here. But believers need it so much for our spiritual growth, especially for believers who cannot read the Bible. Without the word of God, we don't have the right knowledge, and we do not really know for ourselves what we are believing in."**

Shang, 22, from the Jingpo tribe in rural Yingjiang County, Yunnan. He received a Jingpo Bible through Bible Society, his first Bible in his mother language.



# Engagement

## Lebanon

In the second half of 2019 in cooperation with 13 partner churches, nearly 4,000 children benefited from the Literacy program.

Darine and her younger sister Asraa are refugee children in Lebanon. Their mother said, "When we first came here from Syria, they didn't know how to read or write. But now after going to school, they can read and write. Thank God they're in a much better state than when we first arrived here."

At the beginning of 2020, 750 students enrolled in the literacy program. When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Lebanon in March, this program was stopped by the lockdown. There was a prohibition of gatherings and the displaced students were not able to communicate through social media platforms because of their poor living conditions. However, the team is still in touch with all partners and working to complete the program when schools reopen.

## China

In 2019, this project supported literacy classes in 15 different cities or counties with 30 churches in Shandong, eight churches in Yunnan and 39 churches in Gansu. Nearly 5,000 believers have attended the literacy classes this year, including 600 ethnic minority believers.

Also in 2019, two Han literacy classes and six literacy classes of minority groups were held for about 800 students. These students, at the first level of learning, are largely the elderly and elders of the church.

During 2020, this work was unable to begin as scheduled due to COVID-19 and the subsequent closure of churches in January. Literacy classes are just beginning in many places throughout China and the project coordinators anticipate reaching 9,000 people by the end of 2020.

**"We are thankful to the kindness of our overseas brothers and sisters... Scripture literacy classes not only teach us how to read and write, but more importantly, they also teach us about God's truth. And God's truth protects us from the lies of the evil one."**  
Yingli



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# Capacity Building

## Arab-Israeli Bible Society (AIBS)

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the team has sought out new ways and strategies to reach their people with the word of God. Like many others, Zoom has become a temporary alternative for meeting face-to-face in workshops. So far, highlights of the year have included a five-month Bible quiz, ten Bible summer camps, four conferences and 41 workshops for families, women, and pastors, as well as conducting 20 workshops in schools on bullying. Currently in production is the second edition of the Greek Orthodox children's Bible, 55 Bible Devotions and the next edition of their magazine for families.

A participant of an AIBS event for young women was impacted by the topic of self-esteem. This young person became a Christian and shared: "I was so encouraged from this meeting to see myself through the eyes of God, I did not imagine that someone could care about us and do a special magazine to address us. Thank you so much!"

A 17-year-old who is not yet committed to Christ shared the following experience:



"The title of this course 'The Creator and the Creation' made me think and contemplate, which led me to draw closer to God. My spiritual life has grown and been impacted most through the Bible study that we have been doing. Indeed, this course has deepened my perspective and relationship towards Christ. The atmosphere of this course was very comfortable and special, I felt peace and acceptance that I have never felt in any other classes that I have taken."



# Australia



## Translation

### Remote and Indigenous Ministry Support (RIMS)

As parts of Australia introduced stronger COVID-19 restrictions to combat a second wave of infections, limited access to remote communities remained in force. Translation work, audio recording, publication and distribution have continued, making use of limited opportunities.

Our RIMS team:

- Published the 'Story of Ruth' in Nyoongar language of south west Western Australia. Plans are underway for a launch and dedication of this publication, and a multi-voice audio recording workshop.

"I surprised myself that I was able to translate the Bible stories. It made me so proud that I can do my Adnyamathanha language...by the grace of the Lord you can do anything. I love doing my language! It is an everyday thing with me...The language is important to me...I want it for the younger generations so they will always know their Adnyamathanha language."

Lily Neville, Adnyamathanha Translator

- Coordinated the typesetting of the following Scripture volumes: Gumatj New Testament Revision; Anmatyerr MiniBible and the Book of Psalms in Kunwinjku.
- Developed a Pitjantjatjara Bible Language app. This app allows the text to become highlighted as the audio is read and has a 'verse of the day' feature as well as an option to 'share a verse' with other contacts. Continued supporting the translation of the Old Testament into Pitjantjatjara. The translation team has also been developing a Pitjantjatjara Prayer Book. This book will form a yearly devotional, featuring daily Scripture readings with accompanying prayers from the translators.
- A revised Pitjantjatjara Hymnbook is also currently in the final stages of typesetting in preparation for printing. The revised Pitjantjatjara Shorter Bible continues to be in demand from communities, with the Community Stores asking to stock copies for sale. These stores sell everything from food and groceries to clothing and camping gear, but they have been asked by their customers to stock these Bibles.
- Prepared a **three-week Kriol Audio Workshop** in Darwin, with the aim of recording 200 chapters of the Old Testament. Although the workshop was planned for April – May, it was postponed until August 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Continued to support the Nungalinga Diploma of Translation Course.
- The aboriginalbibles.org.au website had **96,500 views of an Indigenous translation**, or a book of Scripture downloaded from the site from May to end of July.
- **Four more languages** were made available in multiple formats on the website. This included the Gospel of Luke in Nyoongar, Wangurri, Alyawarr and Anmatyerr Scripture texts.
- Published a 'God's Story for the Outback' in Adnyamathanha and a Hymnbook in Adnyamathanha, translated by Lily Neville.





# Distribution

## Remote and Indigenous Ministry Support (RIMS)

Approximately **35,000 pieces of Scripture** were distributed to Indigenous communities and those involved in ministry to Indigenous people groups across Australia as part of the Indigenous Scripture Grants Program.

With funding remaining due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel, the RIMS team ordered 1,000 Megavoice audio players to be loaded and distributed in multiple languages across Indigenous communities during the second half of 2020.

## Scripture Grants

Bible Society Australia's Scripture Grants Program provided Scriptures and resources to chaplains and gospel workers in prisons, hospitals, ports, military bases and training centres, and in school Scripture classes.

Resources were provided to ministries such as those for refugees; women's (and children) refuges; Australian and overseas university student ministry; Sex worker ministry; vulnerable kid's camps for children from difficult circumstances; ESL ministries; mainly music playgroup outreach; military families; and people experiencing sustained financial hardship.

In total, BSA distributed just under **150,000 pieces of Scripture** free of charge. This included:

- Nearly 28,500 Bibles and resources through the ministry of chaplains.

**"I introduced myself [to adolescent 'Tom'] and told him I had come with a Bible for him. He turned to face me quickly and thanked me. I gave him the Bible and he opened it and began to read immediately from Psalm 88... a Psalm that voices the experience of darkness and trouble in life, and one of the few Psalms that does not end with any change of experience. As he finished reading, he looked up at me and said nothing for quite a few seconds. He simply said, 'God knows my darkness'. I agreed and asked if he would like to pray together. He agreed and we prayed for one another and for the times of darkness that sometimes pervade our lives. And we prayed that in that darkness we might know God's saving presence."**

Hospital chaplain, Rev Shane



- **7,400 Bibles** as a part of the Bibles in Schools ministry. Distribution numbers are lower this year due to COVID19 - the coronavirus closed classes around Australia, and there was a significant drop in grant requests. Yet BSA was able to resource 80 requests for Borrow Bibles and 120 requests for *Big Rescue* CEV Bibles and CEV Youth Bibles.

**"[The students in my Year 6 class] loved looking up the passages and helping each other navigate their way through the Bible. They were keen to understand why I trusted the Bible and could rely on it as my reference...how do I know it is true? Each week they grew in confidence as we looked up relevant passages and learnt memory verses."**

SRE teacher, Clare, Jan 2020





- Nearly **31,000 Bibles and items of Scripture** were supplied to the Defence Forces. An Army Daily Devotional was launched at the end of 2019 and was warmly received. A tri-service, year-long devotional is currently in the editing phase. Launch and distribution are planned for the end of 2020.
- 1,750 people received a Bible through the partnership with the Alpha course. Bibles were given to participants who completed week 6 of the course but did not yet have a Bible of their own, or whose access to the Bible was restricted by cost or some other reason.
- As COVID-19 began to lock down Australian communities, BSA made ministry resource packs available to ministries around the country. Gospels, New Testaments, trauma healing cards, 'Meet Jesus' books, as well as online resources were made available to those involved in outreach to their communities. This work is ongoing.

“I wanted to thank you all for the massive difference you are making in the lives of our Defence Members, including the Army Cadets which I am involved in. As a serving member of the Army, and recipient of the camo Bible whilst on deployment, I could not imagine where I would be now if not for this powerful little book. I pray that your Bibles are spread throughout the ADF and cadets, to provide the shield of protection for all those who believe, and like in my case, those will come to Christ later. My blessings be with you all and thank you.”

Thommo

## Koorong

Despite quite a tumultuous year, Koorong came through this period relatively unscathed. Overall sales were down 4.3% but sales results were comparatively better at -2.1% against 2019 results.

The hard work of the previous 12 months invested in rebuilding the Koorong website, Koorong.com, saw a strong return on investment.

Online sales increased through the pre-Christmas period and more dramatically through the pandemic lockdown period from March to May. **Online proportion of sales continues to grow**, now 34%, which is up from 30%. During the lockdown period this rose to 50%. Koorong's sales growth online for the 12 months was 8.5%, with growth in high double digits between March and June.

Children's books have been in demand during the pandemic, with sales for the year exceeding 455,000 units. Bibles had another standout year, up 5% on 2019.

Music and DVDs continue their structural decline with the shift to digital. After a successful trial of an extended apparel range during the 19/20 financial year, Koorong will give this product range more focus in the coming 12 months.

Lockdown forced the closure of six Koorong cafés across Australia providing an opportunity for a cost-effective décor refresh of them all.

Positive feedback has been received from customers looking for 'just the right book', as demonstrated in this email from a customer:

**"I cannot thank you enough for the outstanding customer service both last year and this year again! You have gone above and beyond and I so, so appreciate your help... I called you in desperation last year asking if you could recommend any books for our 10-year-old daughter. She has now completed the entire series you recommended and absolutely loved them all!"**

Koorong customer





## Publishing

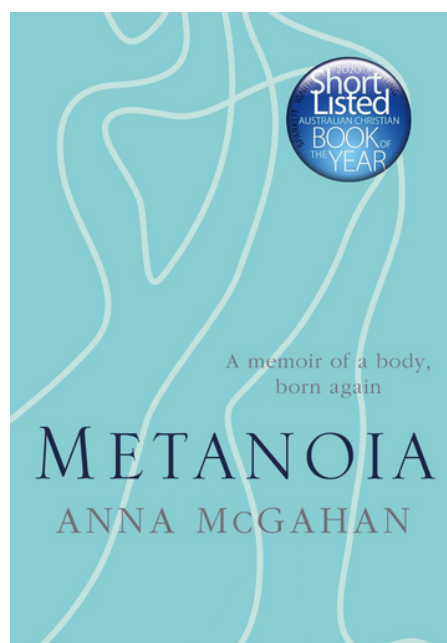
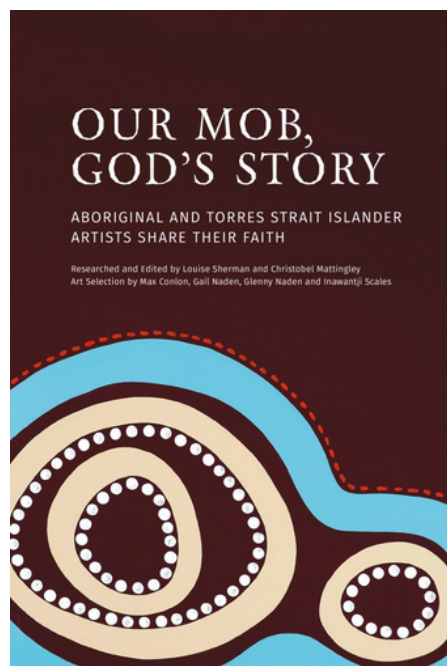
Over **60 projects** have been moving through the publishing schedule this year with **80,000 Bibles** across 16 editions refreshed and reprinted and new Bibles under development. From new waterproof editions for the Australian Defence Force, to a New Christian Bible for Hillsong Church Conferences to freshly commissioned encyclopedia content for our new CEV translation edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia Bible, we work to ensure we have Bibles that will be relevant and engaging for people from all denominations and all walks of life.

While some projects involve months of commissioning, editing and design, others are created quickly to respond to current needs. *Open The Bible. Find Hope* was produced in just one month, in response to the onset of COVID-19.

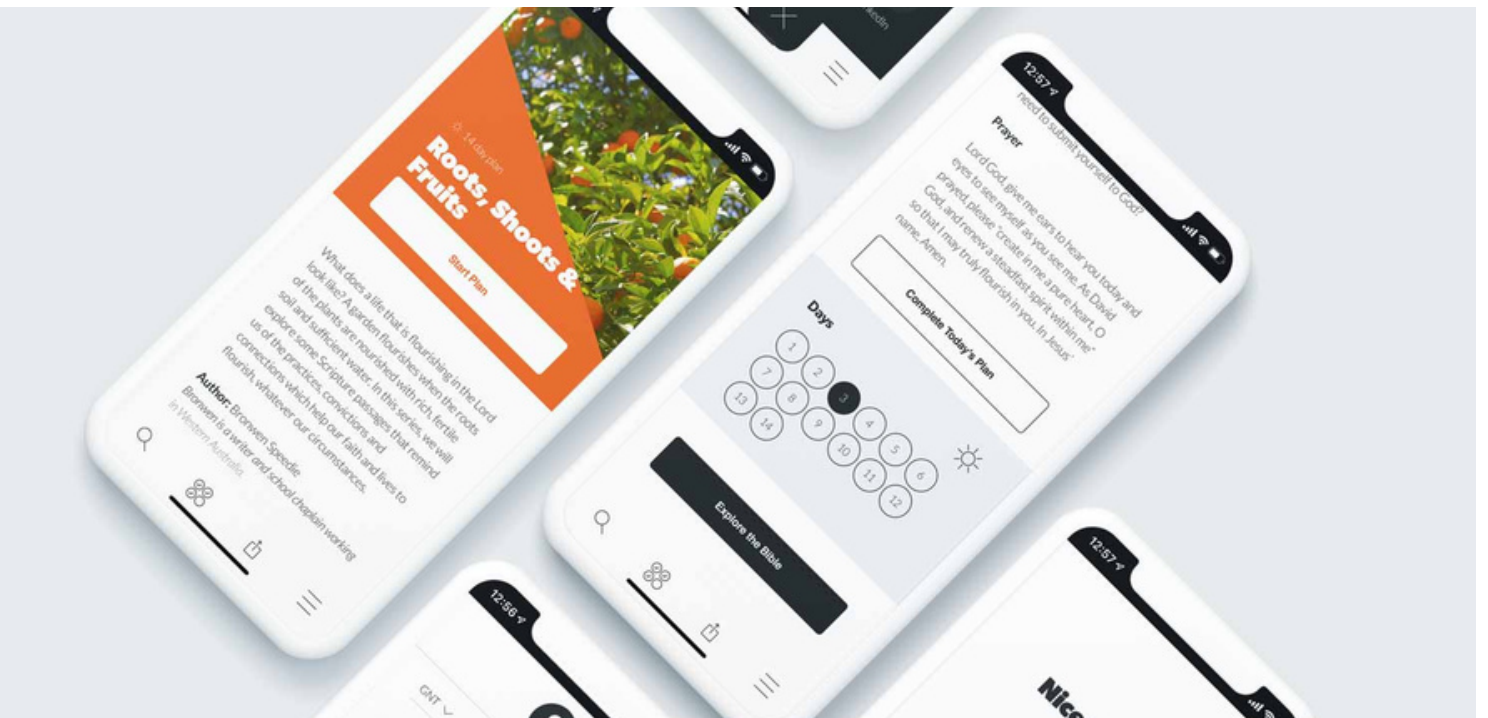
This highly visual digital booklet drew on the hearts of BSA staff across the country as they shared the Scriptures that bring them relief, comfort and hope in dark times.

The new deluxe paperback edition of the beautiful and much-loved *Our Mob, God's Story* was also a highlight of the year. Despite COVID-19 shutting down printers and delaying shipping the new edition has arrived in time for Christmas shopping!

Under Acorn Press, we also publish faith voices that we hope will bring readers closer to Christ and help grow their faith. This year we have also been encouraged by the blessing of Anna McGahan's beautiful and brave conversion memoir, *Metanoia*, (which means change of heart) with short-listings for both the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association Book of the year, just one of five in the Biography and memoir category (a rare achievement for a writer outside of the US) and for the Australian Christian Book of the year. We hope this book might lead many a millennial to explore and find the transforming gift of salvation Jesus offers.







## Engagement

### Daily Bible

BSA's Daily Bible program has produced thirty Bible devotional series, written by Australian Christian leaders and writers. Almost 6000 subscribers have signed up to receive a daily Bible devotion sent directly to their email inbox, with 2.1 million emails sent this year. The daily emails include Bible verses, a short reflection with an application question, and a prayer in response.

In addition to the 6000 subscribers, BSA [launched bible.com.au](https://www.bible.com.au) in September 2019, a platform which provides free, unrestricted access to the Bible with tools to help people read and share the word. Past devotional series of Daily Bible form a library of content to help readers engage with God's word, grow a regular Bible reading habit, and ultimately understand the relevance of the Bible in their life. Since it launched, there have been over 15,000 engagements with bible.com.au, with people able to subscribe to the Daily Bible devotions from the site.

### Youth Engagement

Bible Society Australia is committed to reaching young people with God's word, helping them to Open The Bible and engage with the message of God's love in this challenging world. Several initiatives have taken place to engage with Australian youth over the last year.

BSA's annual youth Masterclass event was held in August 2019. These events, for students in Years 9-11, allow teenagers to explore contemporary issues from a biblical perspective, and to ask a panel of experts searching questions about the Christian faith. Masterclass 2019 was comprised of events in Brisbane, Sydney, Perth, Orange, Adelaide, Newcastle, Victoria, Launceston, Albany and Canberra, and included a livestream of the Sydney event. As a result, **3,450 students from over 215 Schools and groups** were engaged with youth-focused, biblical teaching.

In April 2020, BSA and CPX hosted a Barnabas Schools Ministry conference online due to COVID-19 restrictions. The conference offered teachers and chaplains advice on new ways to connect with their communities during the difficult period of lockdown. The speakers included professors, teachers, principals, researchers and others. There were **253 participants from 128 schools** and organisations from six countries including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Indonesia and Fiji. Participants were presented with seven vastly different topics, but they all had one message, "Building community in a fractured world."

BSA held two online youth forums, called YouthQ, in June, with speakers John Lennox and Dan Patterson addressing the topics, "Where is God in a Coronavirus World?" and "Why isn't God more obvious?" Each event attracted 500 registered attendees and was supported by 20 youth groups.

### **Bibles For Bubs**

This is the 3rd year of Bibles For Bubs, a five year Bible engagement program for newborns and their families. The goal of 2,000 new babies was well and truly exceeded with a record **2,910 registrations!** Feedback coming through from parents has been very encouraging.

**"We received Lydia's new toddler Bible today. We are so delighted to have it and look forward to reading it to her many, many times during these early years of her life. Thank you so much for this initiative that supports parents in teaching their children about the Bible and building faith in Jesus Christ from the youngest of ages."**

Naomi



### **Leader's Connect Resource Platform**

As the pandemic unfolded, it became clear that churches and parents needed ways to engage their congregations and children with the Bible.

To help churches and parents, BSA, with the help of partners gave free access to quality resources for their ministry. The resources included: the technical aspect of pivoting to church in an online environment; children's ministry; free evangelistic resources; youth ministry content and other offers and opportunities. This resource platform was launched just before Easter and had over 4,000 unique visitors during the Easter period.



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# Advocacy

## Eternity News

At a time when the task of opening the Bible to Australians is becoming more difficult in an increasingly secularised society, Christians are often cut off from each other and find it hard to know what God is doing outside their local church. Eternity seeks to highlight “seriously Good News”, the work God is doing in Australia, from stories of people coming to faith, stories that tell of the resilience of churches, and new ways in which Christians are salt and light in our nation and overseas. Just like Elijah in the cave, we need the encouragement of learning of the thousands of other faithful Christians. These stories can be told in print, through the internet, and in the booming area of podcasts – easy listening but with in-depth stories.

Eternity produces somewhere between an Old Testament’s worth of words a year – some 600,000 words. What’s significant for an annual review is that more and more people are reading them. Eternity stories were read 2.55m times on the Eternity site. This is an increase of 33.5% over the 2018-19 Financial Year. There has been a **55% increase** in average monthly digital readership (138K vs 89K).

This year has continued the pattern of doubling the reach of the Eternity website year on year. In the last twelve months Eternity has seen an increase of 105% in monthly digital reach (285k to 585k). This was boosted by adding Apple News as a distribution channel, the promotion of key stories and a continued growth in Facebook followers.





Memorable stories include:

- **A real scoop: Scott Morrison at Hillsong.** Eternity broke this story and major media followed us.
- **Christos Tsiolkas** wanted to talk to Christians, so he gave us one of his first Interviews.
- Missiologist Mike Raiter (Ex Moore and MST) boldly proclaimed **“Asian immigration is saving the Australian church.”**
- **“What happens after the last Christian?”** A stern warning about secularisation by Rory Shiner, senior pastor of Providence City Church in Perth to Christian think tank Freedom For Faith.
- **“Faith as big as a canola Crop”** **Chronicled the life of a faithful farmer**, and is representative for many testimony stories.

In the spirit of not wasting a crisis, Eternity pulled the BSA print operations together in a new BSA magazine, combining Sower, Koorong and an advertising-supported Eternity section. Early indications are that our audience appreciates the parts of Bible Society working together on a joint product.

The Eternity podcast network achieved over 250,000 downloads. This includes John Dickson’s Undeceptions podcast which has held top spot in the Australian Religions Chart during each of its three seasons, making number one in the UK and Ireland as well. It has held the number three slot in the US.

The Eternity podcast network is also pleased to be hosting Jenny Salt from SMBC (Sydney Missionary and Bible College) and Salt – a gentle testimony focused podcast.

At the close of this reporting period, the Eternity team said goodbye to the regular monthly printed Eternity Newspaper. Although not the only reason for the closure, COVID-19 made the distribution of the paper via churches impossible.





### **Centre for Public Christianity (CPX)**

CPX exists to make the truth, beauty, and goodness of Christianity clear to secular Australians. Launched in 2007, CPX seeks to engage the public with a clear, measured, and respectful picture of the Christian faith and the way it can impact all of life for the good. The CPX team aims to 'drop the drawbridge' and walk into the public square confident that Christianity still has something vital to say about life's biggest questions.

A wholly-owned subsidiary of Bible Society Australia, CPX is registered with ASIC as a company limited by guarantee. CPX receives no government funding and relies on donations from organisations and individuals, as well as income generated from its work, to cover all costs.

### **Media Engagement**

In this last financial year CPX appeared in mainstream media outlets 98 times, including 53 published articles, 37 radio interviews, and eight television appearances. In addition, CPX's work was cited by journalists 13 times. Why is this important? Each one of these touchpoints provided an opportunity to offer a Christian perspective on contemporary life.

CPX exists to promote the public understanding of Christian faith through engagement with secular media and the general public with high quality and well-researched presentations, print, video and audio material about the relevance of Christianity in the 21st century.

### **Highlights**

- Simon Smart featuring on the ABC TV special [Easter in Australia](#)
- Justine Toh sitting in for James Carlton as host of Radio National's [God Forbid](#)
- Tim Costello appearing on [Q&A](#)
- Natasha Moore's appearance in a [TV & print](#) interview by the ABC about the imbalance of single women and single men in the church. The article received 500K+ views and was the top story on ABC the day before the fires started.

### **Speaking in the public sector**

CPX staff gave 74 talks at 55 events, to audiences ranging from 50 to 1,000+.

#### **Highlights**

- Mark Stephens tutored students through a six-week “**Historical Jesus**” course at Sydney University
- Natasha Moore delivered the annual **Anglican Deaconess Ministries** lecture in Sydney.
- Justine Toh was on the panel for **Australia at Home**, an online event hosted by The Guardian Essential Media, and Community Council for Australia.

### **School Engagement**

CPX resources are used in schools across the country and the CPX team has been active in increasing their reach in this area.

- Schools regularly using our material as part of their curriculum grew by more than 40% (from 57 to 83).
- Schools that regularly interact with CPX in some way (e.g. use of our material for an event; staff training seminars) grew by 35% (from 182 to 249)
- Individual teachers who receive our special education newsletter grew by 95% (from 287 to 564)

### **Social Media engagement**

The CPX team posted regularly on Facebook and Twitter. They also started an Instagram feed and re-launched their YouTube channel.



**YouTube subscribers went up by 18% to 2,430**



**Instagram followers went from 0 to more than 1,200**



**The most popular Facebook post reached nearly 20,000 people**



# Fundraising

## COVID-19 Update

A number of strategic and tactical initiatives were undertaken that helped to deliver results above budget and above last year. They were:

The relationship-managed approach to stewarding our major donor relationships was deepened with the establishment of a content calendar with regular monthly touchpoints for the team to use.

With the necessary cancellation of two CPX fundraising events one team member has been deployed to:

- Ensure ongoing contact with all CPX major donors.
- Reactivate lapsed CPX donors.

Also, due to COVID-19, the leadership team deployed all of the fundraising team (Donor Care, Church Relations, and Bequest team members) and a few other staff members to an outbound calling campaign in the lead up to the end of financial year. Approximately **4,200 unique donors** were contacted eliciting financial support of just **over \$1m**.

The team encountered donors in five different categories:

1. Those who gave at the same level as last year,
2. Those who gave less, often due to stresses related to COVID-19,
3. Those who decided to give more,
4. Those who were reactivated (see below), and
5. Those who are brand new donors to BSA and/or CPX.

New CPX and BSA donors were welcomed and the outbound calling campaign was successful in reactivating CPX and BSA donors who gave significant amounts. Reactivated donors are defined as those who did not give in the previous financial year but gave in 2019/20.

Full year bequest income exceeded both budget and 2018/19 at **\$2.54m**. 85 separate bequests were received for an average of \$31k. 38 'Thank You' events were held across the country, reaching 457 supporters at an average attendance rate of 12 per event. Events were cancelled in late February due to COVID-19.

Bible Society could not do what it does without the incredible generosity of its donors.

One of Bible Society's donors, Don from Victoria, is characteristic of the faithful and encouraging support BSA receives:

**"I love Bible Society, and I've been a supporter my whole life. It was known as the British and Foreign Bible Society then. I still remember the four-line choruses we were given to sing, including "The best book to read is the B I B L E. If you read it every day, it will help you on your way..." . My Uncle Rev Euan Fry was a translator for Bible Society in Canberra, focusing on Pacific Islander languages."**

Don prays for BSA staff and the BSA mission regularly.

Similarly, Ali, a long term supporter of CPX, describes the CPX team's engagement in the public square as being like a guest at a dinner party. "You don't take your place in the marketplace for granted, but you really think through things and you come up with beautifully engaging content."



# Finance

For over 200 years Bible Society Australia (BSA) has been committed to Bible mission. In 2020 this purpose is reflected in our vision statement; to impact and influence Australia and the world by Opening The Bible to all people everywhere by all means possible. Our work continues to grow and change, adapting to a more complex and challenging world environment. In this context we are appreciative of the steadfast and generous assistance of our donors and supporters. Through them and with our mission partners we can continue to respond to the ever-increasing need in our world for the Bible.

In 2020 the COVID-19 global pandemic has caused unprecedented economic upheaval and uncertainty across the world. BSA responded by assessing the key financial risks including donation income and retail trading, and operational risks associated with staff safety, supply chains, and disruptions to local and international mission projects. BSA communicated with all the key stakeholders, staff, customers, suppliers, and mission partners and developed a response to address the major impacts. Despite the early falls in retail trading and donations, income remained resilient with increases in online sales and donations associated with the end of financial year appeal. In addition, the Federal Government Jobkeeper and Cash flow boost payments of \$2.5 million cushioned the falls in income and offset some of the costs from the impact of the pandemic.

At a local level mission projects were able to adapt using digital and online technology. BSA international mission work, however, was substantially affected with projects suspended or operating at reduced levels. Many Bible Societies in the international fellowship operate in countries devastated by the pandemic. BSA in response to a request from the Executive Board of United Bible Societies agreed to contribute \$0.5 million to a Solidarity Fund to provide financial assistance to those Bible Societies most affected by COVID-19. The situation and the financial risks continue to be monitored as events unfold in 2021.

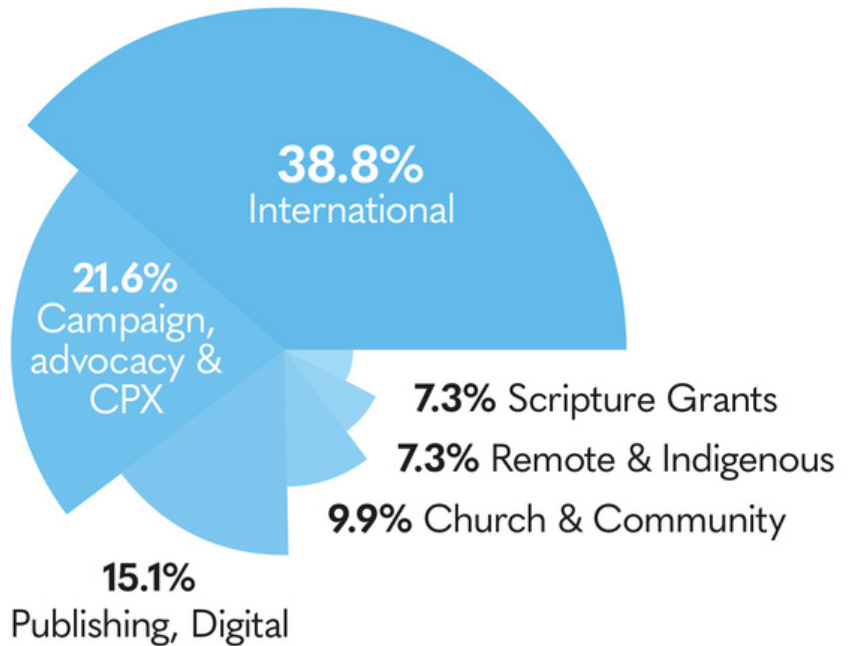
The BSA financial results for 2020 were underpinned by donation and bequest income of \$13.9 million and a total mission spend of \$8.7 million. After allowing for \$2.4 million donation income allocated for future spend, this represents 76 cents in every dollar donated going to mission. A total of 51 projects in 36 countries involving distribution, translation, engagement and advocating for the Bible saw tens of thousands of people impacted by our work. In China 76,500 Bibles were distributed to the rural poor, and in Nicaragua 92,800 Bibles were given to families of children suffering from cancer. In Vietnam translation projects for a minority ethnic group reached milestones during the year. In Lebanon 3,800 children attended literacy classes, and in China 5,000 people were reached with literacy classes. Our emergency relief work in countries like Vanuatu devastated by a cyclone, in Syria and Iraq torn apart by war, our trauma healing and distribution work continues to support those most in need.



TOTAL DONATIONS

**\$13,900,000**

MISSION EXPENDITURE



In Australia 150,000 Scriptures were distributed to chaplains through our grants program, and 35,000 Scriptures were provided to Indigenous communities and ministry partners. Digital translations of Indigenous languages were made available in 2020 with 96,500 views in three months to July 2020. Our advocacy work through CPX included articles in the media, interviews, videos, and seminars reaching thousands with the message of the Christian faith. These and many other mission projects and initiatives were undertaken throughout 2020. Opportunities to increase our local and international mission work are underway in 2021 including support for those communities affected by COVID-19.

The BSA 2020 net result from operations was a surplus of \$2.0 million. This result includes an unrestricted deficit of \$0.8 million and a restricted surplus of \$2.8 million. The BSA 2020 reported results provide a financially sound footing with significant reserves, liquidity, and net assets to face the challenges and build the mission opportunities in the new financial year.



**Bible Society Australia**  
**Annual Review 2019-2020**

[biblesociety.org.au](http://biblesociety.org.au)

