

## CONNECTING SALVOS IN MISSION

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## news

### Lieut-Col Olive Lucas receives Order of the Founder

By Simone Worthing



Lieut-Colonel Olive Lucas proudly displays her Order of the Founder medal and pin.

Lieutenant-Colonel Olive Lucas, a retired officer whose service in Africa, Australia and India is legendary and ongoing, has been awarded the Army's highest honour – the Order of the Founder.

Commissioner Miriam Gluyas, Australian Territorial Commander, made the surprise presentation on 4 February at Brisbane's Stafford Corps, Olive's home corps where she continues to serve.

Olive's extended family, colleagues, friends and those whose lives she has impacted so deeply, had travelled to Stafford from around the city and nation to witness the honour conferred on this much-loved and highly respected lady.

"Today I have the incredible privilege of presenting to Olive what not many people around the world are presented with – the Order of Founder," said Miriam, to an audible hum of surprise and support from the congregation.

"I have known this lady for about 40 years. When I was here, at Albion and Albany Creek (as it was then), there was always one person I knew I could count on for wise counsel, for friendship, for godly wisdom – and you have always been all of that for me ... and you've been there for my family in some very difficult times."

Miriam also spoke of Olive's heart for the world, her desire to see people saved, and passion for praying for others and wanting the best for them.

#### Personal tributes

Two speakers paid tribute to Olive – Major Rowena Smith, Olive's niece, and Lieut-Colonel Elizabeth Johnson, who served with Olive in Africa and flew from Victoria to honour her long-term friend.

Lieut-Colonel Elizabeth spoke of Olive's perpetual motion and how it would be a brave person who tried to keep up with her.

"This perpetual motion is not unfocused, but quite the reverse," she said. "The heart of all that Olive does is her total commitment to God and people. She's very, very caring and she's totally faithful. When Olive commits to something, she remains committed – even in retirement. She just changed the geographical area of her full-time service! She is still committed to her activities . . . and is vitally interested in the people she meets."

#### Presentation ceremony

Miriam presented Olive with an Order of the Founder medal, a pin and a framed citation that reads, 'For her untiring heart and commitment to the Mission of The Salvation Army, particularly in Australia and India. We honour your Christlike service.'

'I hereby admit the said Lieutenant-Colonel Olive Lucas to the Order of the Founder and direct that her name be inscribed on the roll of the Order presented this fourth day of February in the year of our Lord, 2024'.

The citation is signed by General Lyndon Buckingham, international leader of The Salvation Army.

Miriam prayed, thanking God for Olive, her faithful service and her desire to be in relationship with others and see them find Jesus. She thanked God for Olive's family and others in the room who were there because "Olive shared Jesus with them".

After the meeting, Olive was surrounded by friends and family, paying their own personal tributes and expressing their joy at the honour Olive had just received.

"I am just overwhelmed," said Olive. "I think of those on the roll, who have received this before me, including my father-in-law, Colonel Bramwell Lucas (2001). I knew there would be some acknowledgement, but I never imagined this."

# news



Commissioner Miriam Gluyas, Uncle Vince Ross and Colonel Winsome Merrett cut the RAP cake at the Yakila conference.

## Yakila conference a celebration of progress

By Anthony Castle

Over 150 delegates gathered for the Yakila – Walking and Talking Together conference at the Adelaide Hills Convention Centre on 8-11 February.

The gathering was an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Salvation Army personnel to walk alongside each other through truth-telling and prayer.

The event celebrated the completion of the first stage of the national Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and the journey The Salvation Army has taken with First Nations peoples since its launch in 2020.

The first two days of the conference included shared space with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel and Salvationists, with the remaining days inviting non-indigenous personnel and corps members to join. Welcome to Country was performed by Major Moogy Sumner (AM), and the opening night hosted a performance by Aboriginal dance group Dusty Feet Mob. Uncle Vince Ross, a Madi Madi man and The Salvation Army's convenor of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council, and Territorial Commander Commissioner Miriam Gluyas, brought opening prayers and greetings.

"What you have to do is go two steps back and see where you've come from," Miriam said, reflecting on thoughts shared by Uncle Vince. "Then you need to go two steps forward and see where you are right now. Today has been an incredible day of thinking through where we are, but we're not stopping here. We're going two steps forward again to see all that can be. We are going to believe big and imagine what God will do."

Shirli Congoo, General Manager of The Salvation Army's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team, facilitated

Yarning Circles and reflections. First Nations guest speakers and their subjects included Mark Yettica Paulson (our readiness for truth-telling), Gabriel Bani (Torres Strait Islander cultural worldview), Grant Paulson (sacred drivers for social change), and Professor Anne Patel-Gray (a journey of the vision for First Nations people).

Lucy Davis, Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Strategic Manager for The Salvation Army, presented on the outcomes of the RAP.

"A Reconciliation Action Plan gives your organisation a framework to contribute to the reconciliation movement," Lucy explained. "Reconciliation Action Plans deliver tangible and substantive benefits to First Nations people and increase cultural safety in the workplace. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership and trust-building, accountability and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources."

RAPs consist of five components – race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, and historical acceptance. The presentation was followed by a cake-cutting to celebrate, with others joining via livestream from across the country.

"We have one of the most progressive RAPs in the faith-based community," Lucy said. "I am so proud of the work we've done, but it would never have happened without leadership. If we didn't have those leaders with us on every step of this journey, our RAP would not have had so much success."

The Salvation Army remains committed to transforming individual lives and communities across Australia, with more to come in the next stage of the RAP. Gatherings like Yakila help build an understanding of the practical and spiritual realities of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to better partner together to see a transformed Australia. The gathering was closed by Uncle Vince Ross, who shared a blessing.



# feature



Auxiliary-Lieutenants Simon and Natalie Steele started their new appointment as Rural Chaplains in south-west NSW earlier this year.

## Steeles swap helicopter for a 4WD in new rural ministry

By Lauren Martin

They say the red dust of the Outback gets in your blood. That was certainly the case for Auxiliary-Lieutenants Natalie and Simon Steele, who responded to a call from God in 2008 to become flying padres with The Salvation Army Outback Flying Service based in Mount Isa, Queensland. They planned to 'give it a go' for three years, but God's call and the alluring beauty of the landscape and its people led to them staying for 15 years.

Now, the couple have said goodbye to an area that God has used to shape and transform them, knowing that the time was right to step out in faith into the next adventure of following Jesus. This time, swapping a helicopter for a 4WD and an appointment as Rural Chaplains – South-West NSW, based in Griffith.

### Memories of the Outback – Simon

Simon Steele is no more at home than in the cockpit of a helicopter. He loves flying, and when God acted to combine this passion with his faith and a call to ministry, he and his wife Natalie jumped at the chance.

Almost at the start of their appointment, significant floods swept through Normanton and outlying outback communities and The Salvation Army was asked by the State Emergency Service to assist. "It really ignited my passion for that kind of work," Simon remembers. "There was also Cyclone Yasi ... [and] there's been a lot of other disasters. I've really enjoyed the challenge of that and

utilising the tools that I have like my helicopter experience, to those things. Landing at properties [to bring in food and supplies] that you couldn't get into by plane and were difficult to get into."

Simon's expertise earned him a reputation among emergency services personnel, and when a serious boating accident occurred on Christmas Eve in 2018, Simon didn't hesitate to respond to a call for assistance. "That was a big highlight for me of our time in Mount Isa," says Simon.

Simon and his friend, Jim Lillecrapp, were first on the scene of the accident at Lake Julius, 70km north-east of Mount Isa. They encountered a family of three whose boat had collided with an underwater log, resulting in serious and life-threatening injuries to three of them. ▶





# feature

Simon, Jim and Lake Julius couple Belinda and Robert Worlein acted quickly, enabling the injured people to get treatment and be airlifted to hospital.

The four were honoured with a 2019 Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Queensland Local Hero Award for their quick thinking and level-headed response. They had already received the RFDS Local Hero award in Mount Isa.

## Memories of the Outback – Natalie

"I think back on some of the events that we've been involved in," says Natalie. "Places that we've been able to go, I think of Urandangie and the relationships that we had there and the different kinds of ministry that we had there, and we were able to invite other people to come and experience this unique iconic outback Australian community."

One of the legacies the Steeles will leave in the red dirt is their ministry to the small outback community of Urandangie, 180km south-west of Mount Isa. The couple began travelling there in Christmas 2008, delivering Christmas hampers and toys for children and running a church service. They also began to lead Anzac Day services each year and attended the annual cricket day, run by the local publican, Pam Forster, which raised money for the Outback Flying Service.

The ministry then expanded with an annual 'Dangie Pamper Day', organised by Mount Isa Corps in partnership with the Longreach Rural Chaplains and volunteer teams from Townsville's Riverway Recovery Mission.

"In the Outback, there is this resilience – we always talk about the resilience of people in the outback," says Natalie. "Part of that is because of leaning on other people in community, and when you see that happening well, you realise you don't have to be all things to all people. Living in the outback has taught me that I need to do my part well and ask for help and lean on others and recognise other people's strengths and encourage them in that – just as God does for us."

## God's provision

Natalie and Simon knew that God was closing doors and opening others when they were first called into Salvation Army ministry at Mount Isa. Stepping into the unknown tested their faith and drew them into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

When their appointment changed in 2017 to include the additional role of corps officers at Mount Isa Corps, it was another time of trusting in God's provision as they lost members of their team and were the only Salvation Army officers left in a small, extremely remote community.

"There was an added layer of isolation," remembers Natalie of that time. "God often calls us into the unknown, and he does call us to step out in faith, we want the assurances, but we can feel that call of God. To step out and to see his faithfulness and the way that he provides for us and that he is also so caring and personal."

Both say they learned first-hand about the beauty of God's 'body of Christ' design during their time as the Corps Officers in Mount Isa, following Jesus in their giftings and recognising the giftings of those in the community around



them. During this time, the corps thrived, and fruitful connections were made with Christians of other denominations in the town. Simon also started a men's group in the Helicopter Hangar, which was a fruitful ministry.

## New beginnings

Both Natalie and Simon, whilst sad to leave Mount Isa (where their youngest son – now 18 – has stayed), know that God is calling them to a change in appointment. The Salvation Army ceased its Outback Flying Service, based at Mount Isa, two years ago, and it was one of the signs that God was, once again, closing doors.

Natalie will miss the sunsets and the beauty of the landscape but says, "it's kind of nice to know there's a bit of red dirt just down the road" from their south-west NSW appointment, that stretches to the dusty edges of the state. "There is in the harshness there [in Outback Queensland] something that is also very beautiful. It's often the way, that the things that are difficult are also where the blessing lies," she says.



# army archives



The type of trough Tom Benson would have been dunked in following his conversion after hearing Salvo pioneer John Gore (inset) preach in Adelaide's Botanic Park.

## Early Salvationist 'baptised' in an Adelaide horse trough

By Barry Gittins

On 15 November 1880, Tom Benson became a Christian and a Salvo. The spot where he came to faith was a tad unusual – kneeling beside “a water trough in Morphett Street, Light's Square” in Adelaide. Back then, the troughs were commonplace and necessary conveniences, allowing your thirsty mount a drink.

The circumstances of Tom's conversion were quirky because, on that particular Saturday night, he'd rocked up to the aforementioned spot – where Salvationists publicly gathered to sing, witness and pray – to indulge in a bit of horseplay with the Salvos.

“[With 14] others, I left the Hotel Galateer, a very low place at the time, to give the Army a 'rough time'... intending to upset its Open Air Meeting,” he told the *War Cry* many years later (in pieces published in 1947 and 1948).

“Although I was a bit merry with drink, so soon as I arrived at the meeting, I was convicted of my sin and of my need for salvation. The power of God took hold of me, and I straightaway knelt down, seeking God's mercy, which I found that night.

Tom didn't receive the same mercy from his 14 mates; his “old companions flung him into the trough after the gathering” – a baptism of sorts to test the strength of his new faith.

Tom states that it “is with pride that I claim the honour of being the colour sergeant who first carried the original Salvation Army flag in Australia in those lively marches of early day fighting”. (The story goes that the first act of Australia's first Salvo officer, Captain Tom Sutherland, in

February 1881, was to appoint a flag sergeant to carry and protect his flag.)

'Early-day fighting' is an exotic phrase. For Brother Benson, fighting as a Salvationist meant telling people about Jesus, helping them practically and fighting against the evils of cruelty, abuse, greed, fear and hatred.

It was a different kind of combat than he was used to; Tom, a self-declared “thief, gambler and a drunkard at the age of 14”, had grown up with violence. He told of how he'd put his “drunken father out of the home” after he had “crippled my godly mother for life”.

It was not long after Tom's release from gaol (he was sentenced “for knocking a policeman unconscious”) that he first heard Salvo pioneer (later Adjutant) John Gore talking about God in Adelaide's Botanic Park.

On his way to becoming sober, a saint and a Salvo, Tom recalls attending a famous church meeting in South Australia's capital, where it was “asked if anyone would like a word. John Gore, a milkman from England, stood up and spoke, and Mr Edward Saunders [afterwards a lieut-colonel], a builder [who was] also from the old country, shouted 'Hallelujah! I'll meet you outside'.”

Post that fateful meeting came the Army's first unofficial meetings and Tom's prayers and post-conversion dunking in the water trough.

Tom thanked God he became “a soldier of The Salvation Army in June 1881 and later, as a plumber, worked on the Melbourne Training Garrison, having a workshop at the rear of the headquarters”.

Tom was still to be found serving under the Salvos' flag as an 86-year-old 'soldier' in Queensland – collecting more than £60 for the 1947 Self Denial appeal.

God knows you can't keep an old battler down.