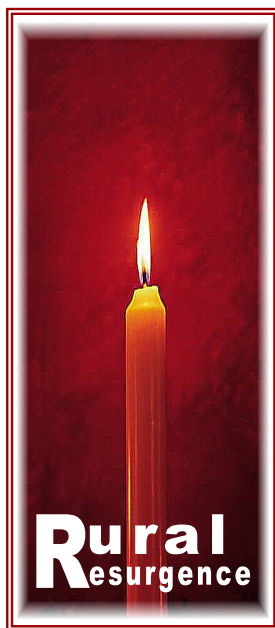


Church planting in
RURAL New South Wales

WEST WYALONG, NSW



BRSS
Baptist Rural Support Services



What is Rural Resurgence

resurge, *ri-surj'*, *v.i.* to rise again.-*n.*
resurgence, to restore to life: to revive: to come to life again [L. *resurgere*, *resurrectum-re-surgere*, to rise.]

Rural Resurgence is not a programme or a catchy name or a passing whim. It is a vision, a commitment, a bold strategy... to plant new Baptist churches across rural New South Wales as the primary means of winning lost people to Jesus Christ. Rural Resurgence is about breaking the drought on church planting in rural NSW.

Baptist Rural Support Services is identifying towns across NSW with populations greater than 2,500. It is developing new models of ministry that are established on Gospel basics. It is seeking to recruit pastors, trained or mature lay people, to take up the challenge of pioneering these new works.

These new ministry models are **cost-effective** in that they do not require an expensive formal training programme, professional salaries or large start-up costs. They are **ministry-effective** in that they return us to our theological roots in the practice of the priesthood of all believers. And they are **Kingdom-effective** in that they operate relationally, able to incarnate with a great diversity of people groups, presenting the Gospel through easy-to-read, up-close authentic lives.

The opportunity for resurgence in rural ministry for Baptists is evident. As other denominations with shrinking budgets, ageing clergy and missionless congregations close small rural chapels and amalgamate rural parishes in an attempt to maintain the status quo or just survive, Baptists are in a unique position to plant new churches and expand into the smallest rural communities.

West Wyalong is part of the Rural Resurgence strategy.

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Executive summary

West Wyalong is one of many towns in rural New South Wales with a town or shire population in excess of 5,000 and without a Baptist Church witness.

BRSS' Rural Resurgence vision is to commence a new era of church planting across rural NSW. West Wyalong is a first part of the Rural Resurgence strategy.

West Wyalong with a town population of 3,331 and a Shire population of 6,439 is strategically located on the junction of the Newell and Mid Western Highways.

The resident Christian churches, viz. Anglican, Christian Revival Crusade, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army and Uniting reflect a strong but nominal Christian tradition in West Wyalong.

The town has a stable and growing employment base with employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. The low unemployment rate (5%) is a further indicator of a healthy and growing employment market. The development of the Cowal Gold project will increase the West Wyalong employment market by an additional 300 jobs during the construction phase and 200 permanent positions during the life of the project. The development of the Pace Farm facility will generate a further 85 positions. Secondary employment from these projects will also provide significant benefit to West Wyalong. In the next two years it is estimated that over \$350 million will be invested in the development of new industries in and around West Wyalong.

The town's housing market is robust and shows stronger growth than the surrounding Riverina region. West Wyalong has well developed community infrastructures providing better than average community support programmes for a town of its size.

From a Church Planting perspective, there is a significant unchurched or dechurched proportion of the West Wyalong population that could and should be the focus of an intentional church planting strategy.

This Report examines a number of Church Planting options but believes a work in West Wyalong is best begun using the House Church model with a view to further expansion of House Church congregations in various parts of the township and surrounding villages and/or to develop further using the SEED Church concept.

It is the writer's belief that we should proceed with the establishment of a Baptist work in West Wyalong and a number of Suggested Actions are provided at the conclusion of the Report to move the process forward.

INTRODUCTION

West Wyalong is the administrative centre for Bland Shire Council and is located approximately 480 kms west of Sydney. The town of West Wyalong is situated on the junction of the Newell and Mid-Western highways. West Wyalong has a town population of 3,331 and a Shire population of 6,439.



In the week April 7 to 11, interviews were conducted with the ministers or leaders of each of the main Christian churches in West Wyalong. These were the Anglican, Christian Revival Crusade, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army and Uniting churches. The only church not to be interviewed was the independent Baptist church, Gateway Baptist, who have no resident pastor or contactable lay person. Gateway uses the Soldiers Memorial Hall in the Wyalong township which is several kilometres out of the main West Wyalong township. The group is small, attendance estimated at around 10 people. The Gateway group is related to one of the independent Baptist groups in the Campbelltown area of Sydney. Seen by the other churches as exclusive. It chooses not to participate in combined church activities.

Following is a brief record of the interviews conducted with the West Wyalong churches.

(Note: To preserve confidentiality, the record of interviews has been omitted from the version of this report made available via the Baptist Union of NSW website)

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

A statistical analysis of the West Wyalong community

Source: 2001 Australian Census
Australian Bureau of Statistics

With supplementary data from
Bland Shire Council Community Plan

Summary overview

Item	West Wyalong		Bland Shire		National	
		%		%		%
Population:	3,331		6,439		18,972,350	
	<i>1,615M</i>		<i>3,254 M</i>			
	<i>1,716F</i>		<i>3,185F</i>			
Australian born:	2,984	90.00	5,817	90.00	13,629,685	72.00
Speaks English only:	3,137	94.20	6,089	94.60	15,013,965	79.15
Religious affiliation:						
Buddhism	6	0.02			357,813	1.90
Christian	2,911	87.40			12,764,342	67.30
Hinduism	6	0.02			95,473	0.05
Islam	0				281,578	1.50
Judaism	0				83,993	0.05
Others	0				92,369	0.05
No religion	176	5.30			2,905,993	15.35
Not stated/undefined	233	7.00			2,187,688	11.55
O'seas visitors	6	0.02			203,101	1.10
Selected averages						
Age	41		39		35	
Household size	2.4		2.6		2.6	
Family income - wkly	\$700-799		\$700-799		\$800-999	
Individual income - wkly	\$300-399		\$300-399		\$300-399	
Rent - wkly	\$100-149		\$50-99		\$150-199	
Housing loan						
Repayments - mnthly	\$400-599		\$400-599		\$800-999	

See further demographic data for West Wyalong from 2001 Census in Appendix A.

Compared to the Australian averages, the above table reveals a strong Anglo-Celtic and Christian tradition for the population of West Wyalong.

EMPLOYMENT

The town of West Wyalong has a working population of 1,393 persons. The unemployment rate of 5% is significantly lower than the State and National averages. The casualised work force is strongly gender based with 327 females or 69% of working women in this category. The following ABS table provides full details.

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2001 Census of Population and Housing			
West Wyalong (UCL 183000) , 14.1 sq. Kms			
B22 SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS (SECOND RELEASE PROCESSING)			
Persons (excluding overseas visitors)			
	Males	Females	Persons
Employed(a):			
Full-time(b)	602	263	865
Part-time	149	327	476
Not stated(c)	28	24	52
Total	779	614	1,393
Unemployed(a)	47	27	74
Total labour force(a)	826	641	1,467
Not in the labour force(a)	413	674	1,087
Unemployment rate(a)	5.7%	4.2%	5.0%
Same address 1 year ago(d)	1,273	1,363	2,636
Different address 1 year ago(d)	235	262	497
Same address 5 years ago(e)	940	974	1,914
Different address 5 years ago(e)	507	560	1,067
(a) Applicable to persons aged 15 years and over.			
(b) Full-time is defined as having worked 35 hours or more in all jobs in the week prior to Census night.			
(c) Includes persons who did not state their hours worked.			
(d) Excludes persons less than 1 year of age.			
(e) Excludes persons less than 5 years of age.			

TOP 10

Top Ten Employment categories

An examination of Industry categories for West Wyalong's labour force reveals that in excess of 90% of the working population is employed in ten industry areas.

These are:

TOP 10

Industry category	Number Employed	%
♦ Retail	245	18.04
♦ Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	122	8.98
♦ Wholesale Trade	121	8.91
♦ Health & Community Services	120	8.83
♦ Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	120	8.83
♦ Education	98	7.22
♦ Manufacture	95	7.00
♦ Construction	87	6.40
♦ Transport & Storage	81	5.96
♦ Government Administration & Defence	77	5.67
♦ Property & Business Services	64	4.71

The following ABS table provides full details by Industry and age cohorts.

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2001 Census								
West Wyalong (UCL 183000) , 14.1 sq. Kms								
B26 INDUSTRY BY AGE (1 of 3)								
Employed persons (excluding o'seas visitors)	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65	Total
	years	years	years	years	years	years	Years+	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3	13	15	17	20	28	24	120
Mining	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	9
Manufacturing	9	19	17	22	18	6	4	95
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	7
Construction	0	11	17	23	25	8	3	87
Wholesale Trade	12	13	32	20	37	7	0	121
Retail Trade	53	24	31	50	56	25	6	245
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	7	15	15	34	27	21	3	122
Transport and Storage	3	6	6	24	26	13	3	81
Communication Services	0	0	0	9	7	0	3	19
Finance and Insurance	0	0	4	11	3	0	0	18
Property and Business Services	3	5	14	17	16	9	0	64
Government Administration and Defence	3	3	16	24	24	7	0	77
Education	0	8	27	27	20	16	0	98
Health and Community Services	3	3	12	37	37	22	6	120
Cultural and Recreational Services	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
Personal and Other Services	3	0	6	15	3	4	3	34
Non-classifiable economic units	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Not stated	6	0	0	3	6	8	9	32
Total	105	126	221	336	332	174	64	1,358

Employment continued

According to the West Wyalong CIC (*Community Information Centre*), there are over \$350 million of developments happening in the WW region, including AWB Ltd, Pace Farm and the Cowal Gold Project; over 300 new full time jobs will be created over the next two years.

In recent years two new employers have moved into West Wyalong.

LAKE COWAL GOLD

North Gold (WA) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of North Limited, is establishing an open cut gold mine, processing facilities and infrastructure at “Cowal West”, on the western shore of Lake Cowal, 25km north of West Wyalong. The project will produce an estimated 2.7 million ounces of gold from 76 million tonnes of ore to be excavated from an ore body on the shore and partly within the high water of Lake Cowal. The project will cost up to \$210 million to develop and employ up to 200 staff. It will produce gold worth a total of about \$1.3 billion over a 13 year period.

The original proposal by North Gold (WA) Limited for developing the gold ore body at Lake Cowal in 1995 was refused by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and Minister for Housing on environmental grounds in 1996. The current development application is a result of a redesign of the project following a review by the Applicant of the environmental aspects of the proposal and a reassessment of the project’s compatibility with the high conservation values of Lake Cowal in the short and long term.

The Company has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Peak Environmental Groups for the establishment of a Lake Cowal Trust Fund financed by the Applicant for the express purpose of funding projects to preserve and enhance the conservation values of the Lake Cowal area. Submissions were received from 125 parties. The majority express strong support for the project on local economic and social grounds.

The Department of Mineral Resources, Department of State and Regional Development and Bland Shire Council strongly support the proposal as do many of the businesses in West Wyalong and local residents. The Australian Heritage Commission, Environment Australia, Department of Land and Water Conservation, Environment Protection Authority, NSW Fisheries and National Parks and Wildlife Service note the potential for impacts on the conservation values of Lake Cowal but recognise too the economic and social worth of the project to the local area, the region and the State. They consider impacts can be controlled and mitigated subject to strict conditions of consent. Local landholders generally are not opposed to the development provided their amenity and livelihood is protected.

On weighing and balancing the evidence before the Inquiry the Commission is satisfied that the impact of the Cowal Gold Project on the environment of Lake Cowal will not be significant in the short or long terms. The Applicant and government agencies, in recognition of the values of Lake Cowal, have proposed a comprehensive environmental management and monitoring system as a tool to achieve optimum environmental outcomes and demonstrate the effectiveness of the

management protocols. The Commission agrees with such and conditions of consent recommended confirm the need for such management plans, monitoring and public reporting of the outcomes.

The Commission is satisfied the Cowal Gold Project will bring positive social and economic benefits to Bland Shire and the State and that environmental concerns do not negate the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and Minister for Housing granting consent, nor other authorities determining aspects of the proposal subject to the conditions recommended.

The development of the Cowal Gold project is in its early stage but is still subject to legal challenge by the traditional land owners and environmental groups.

**STOP PRESS:
Green light for Cowal
June 19, 2003**

The NSW government has given the go-ahead for the \$340 million Cowal gold mine project, 30 kilometres north of West Wyalong. AAP

The New South Wales Government has ended a long running battle over a mine project in the state's central west by giving it approval to proceed.

The \$340 million project at Lake Cowal gold mine can now proceed.

The battle over the mine has been going on for more than ten years, but Premier Carr says the company, Canadian firm Barrick Gold, finally struck a deal with the native title claimants last month to

protect sacred sites and a mining lease was granted by the Government on Friday.

He says the project will provide 300 jobs during construction and 200 during its 13-year life.

"Already the prospect of this mine has other firms taking a keen interest in West Wyalong," Mr Carr said.

The project was previously rejected because it was not up to scratch environmentally, but the company has reduced cyanide levels and will keep mine tailings away from the lake.

Construction will start this year, with mine production to kick in by mid 2005.

ABC On-line, June 19 2003

PACE FARMS

Stage 1 of Pace Farms' world-class egg producing facility in West Wyalong in the Riverina district of NSW was opened in late 2002.

Once fully operational, the Pace Farms facility will be the largest of its type in the Southern Hemisphere, and will produce around 15 and a half million eggs a year.

The eggs will be used to supply all major Australian supermarkets, as well as leading food chains such as McDonalds.

The West Wyalong facility will also provide a major boost to the local economy and regional employment opportunities by generating up to 85 new jobs during peak periods in the growing and laying sides of the operation.

Pace Farms has made use of the most up-to-date egg production technologies in developing this facility and, importantly, has met all of the welfare requirements for cages agreed to by Australia's agriculture ministers in August 2000.

At this stage, only the grower facility has been completed, but a development application, and full environmental impact statement, have recently been submitted covering the laying, grading and packing components of the operation.

Pace Farms were commended for investing in this world-class facility, and in the West Wyalong region, saying it represents a significant boost to the stability and profitability of the Australian egg industry, particularly in regional areas.

The facility demonstrates Pace Farm's commitment to the Australian egg industry, as well as economic and employment growth in the West Wyalong region.

The above reveals a stable and growing employment base for the West Wyalong area with employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. The low unemployment rate is a further indicator of a healthy and growing employment market. The development of the Cowal Gold project will increase the West Wyalong employment market by an additional 300 jobs during the construction phase and 200 permanent positions during the life of the project. The development of the Pace Farm facility will generate a further 85 positions. Secondary employment from these projects will also provide significant benefit to West Wyalong.

HOUSING

Housing prices for the West Wyalong area are not available through the usual Residex quarterly surveys. Residex does, however, provide a broad indicator for the Riverina district which includes West Wyalong but is strongly influenced by larger centres in the Riverina such as Griffith.

Riverina Housing

The median price for the quarter was \$115,000 and the median rent was \$125. The capital growth was 2.35% with a rental yield of 5.67% for the quarter. The approximate number of properties in the Riverina region is 34,986. 2001 Fourth Quarter figures

A survey of West Wyalong's four real estate offices produced the following information (*A phone survey of each of the four real estate offices was conducted by the writer on June 19, 2003*) :

ELDERS	MONCRIEFF	OXLEY	WESFARMERS
Price range: \$100,000-\$235,000	Price range: \$90,000-\$180,000	Price range: \$80,000-\$200,000	Price range: \$80,000-210,000
Average: \$140,000	Average: \$130,000	Average: \$140,000	Average: \$140,000
Average Rental: \$160-170 p/wk	Average Rental: \$140-150 p/wk	Average Rental: \$140-150 p/wk	Average Rental: \$140 p/wk

Average rental costs are based on a 3-4 bedroom house in good repair and condition

Discussions with each real estate office revealed a number of unanimous views regarding the West Wyalong housing market:

- There is a general shortage of good housing stock for sale in the town
- There is strong demand for rental properties with demand exceeding supply
- Homes of brick construction are highly sought but in short supply
- There is a desperate shortage of vacant land for building in the town area
- A new subdivision with 60-70 building blocks is proposed for development on the old hospital site
- The Pace and Cowral developments will place greater strain on the town's housing market
- The building industry/trades are facing a very secure and prosperous future

The above figures for West Wyalong indicate a housing market stronger than that of the Riverina region generally. Strong demand will keep prices buoyant and will create significant activity in the building industry for the foreseeable future. The rental market will remain difficult until more housing stock becomes available.

Community services

West Wyalong has a well developed community infrastructure providing better than average community support programmes for a town of its size. The following is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all the community programmes and activities in operation but an indication of the breadth of services available. A comprehensive list has been produced by Bland Shire Council and is available from their website under the title 'Community Directory'.

ARTS & CULTURE

- West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Bland Bizarre
- Bland District Historical Society
- Wyalong and Wyalong Tidy Towns Committee
- West Wyalong Amateur Dramatic and Choral Society
- West Wyalong Town Band

CHILDRENS SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

- Bland Community Children's Services
- Bland and Temora Family Day Care
- West Wyalong Family Day Care Playgroup
- West Wyalong Playgroup
- Bland Shire Mobile Resource Unit
- West Wyalong Cubs, Scouts and Venturers
- Guides Local Support Group
- Isolated Children's Parents Association Inc. West Wyalong Branch

COUNCIL

- Bland Shire Council

COMMUNITY SERVICE GROUPS

- Bland Shire Toy Library
- Bland Shire Ratepayers and Residents Association
- QUOTA Club of West Wyalong
- Rotary Club of West Wyalong
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- United Hospitals Auxiliary, West Wyalong Branch
- West Wyalong APEX Club
- West Wyalong Life Education Sub-committee
- West Wyalong Lions Club
- West Wyalong Red Cross
- West Wyalong Torchbearers for Legacy
- West Wyalong Truck Drivers Association
- West Wyalong VIEW Club
- West Wyalong and District Senior Citizens

CHURCHES & RELIGIOUS GROUPS

St. Mary's Parish Pastoral Council
St. Barnabas Mothers Union
Christian Women Communication Internationally
Lutheran Women's Guild.
Presbyterian Women's Association
West Wyalong Catholic Women's League
Presbyterian Women's' Association (Evening Branch)
Salvation Army Home League
Ministers Fraternal
Christian Revival Crusade
Jehovah's Witnesses
Lutheran Church West Wyalong Parish
Presbyterian Church - West Wyalong
Salvation Army
St. Barnabas Anglican Church
St. Mary's Catholic Church
Uniting Church

CRAFT & LEISURE

West Wyalong Show Society
Bland Spinners and Weavers Group Inc.
Lowana Pottery Club
West Wyalong Garden and Floral Art Club
Wyalong Art Group
Wyalong Dolls Club
Wyalong Porcelain Painting Group

EDUCATION & TRAINING

West Wyalong Community College
St. Mary's Catholic School P and F Association
West Wyalong High School P and C Association
West Wyalong Primary School P and C Association
Wyalong P and C Association
Bland District Pre-School
West Wyalong Public School
Wyalong Public School
St. Mary's Catholic School
West Wyalong Public School
Wyalong Public School
West Wyalong High School
Riverina Institute of TAFE - West Wyalong Campus

EMERGENCY SERVICES

West Wyalong Bush Fire Brigade
West Wyalong State Emergency Services

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Central West Recruitment
Employment National
Forbes Employment and Training Service (FEATS)
Special People In Need of Support (SPINS)

HOME & SUPPORT SERVICES

West Wyalong Telecross Service
Neighbour Aide Service
West Wyalong Meals on Wheels Incorporated
Home Care Service of NSW, West Wyalong Service Outlet
Central West Community Options
Bland Community Transport Group Inc.

LAW & LAW ENFORCEMENT

West Wyalong Court House Clerk of Local Court
NSW Department of Police West Wyalong

LICENSED CLUBS

West Wyalong Country Club
West Wyalong Services and Citizens Club

MEDIA

The Daily Advertiser
Southern Weekly
West Wyalong Advocate
2WG 1152 Riverina Broadcasters
ABC Radio Riverina
Radio 2RG 99.7 Star FM
PRIME Television
TEN Capital Television
WIN Television

MEDICAL-HEALTH SERVICES

West Wyalong Community Health Centre
West Wyalong Primary School Dental Clinic
Alcoholics Anonymous
Cancer Patients Assistance Society - West Wyalong Branch
Breast Cancer Support Group
Breast Cancer Support Service - Volunteer Visitor
Dr. L. Zalokar G.P.
West Wyalong Medical Centre - Dr. McGee & Dr. John
Yang M. Dental Surgeon
Lord A.C. Optometrist
Wyalong/Ungarie Health Service

PENSIONS & BENEFITS

Centrelink

RURAL INTEREST GROUPS

NSW Rural Action Movement - West Wyalong Branch
West Wyalong District Council of NSW Farmers
West Wyalong Show Society
West Wyalong Country Women's Association

SPORTS & RECREATION

Holland Park Swimming Pool
Walking for Pleasure
West Wyalong and District Little Athletics and Amateur Club Inc.
West Wyalong Basketball Association Inc.
West Wyalong Junior Basketball Association
West Wyalong Ladies Basketball
West Wyalong Bowling Club and Recreation Club
West Wyalong Country Club
West Wyalong Women's' Bowling Club
West Wyalong and District Cricket Association
West Wyalong Junior Cricket Association
Services and Citizens Anglers Club
West Wyalong Aero Club
Girral West Wyalong Australian Rules Football Club
West Wyalong Rugby League Club Inc.
West Wyalong Junior League
West Wyalong Rugby Union Club
West Wyalong Country Club
West Wyalong Harness Racing Club
West Wyalong Motor Sports Club
West Wyalong Netball Incorporation
Sporting Shooters Association of Australia West Wyalong Branch No.6
West Wyalong Small Bore and Air Rifle Club Inc.
West Wyalong Amateur Swimming Club
West Wyalong Clay Target Club
West Wyalong Pistol Club
West Wyalong Tennis Club Inc.
Volleyball West Wyalong Inc.
West Wyalong Pony Club

SUPPORTED LIVING

Ungarie Retirement Village
Waratah Retirement Village
Marashel Inc. - for people with a disability

CHURCH PLANTING IN WEST WYALONG

West Wyalong is a town of strong Anglo-Celtic and Christian tradition. In the 2001 Census, those indicating 'Christian' as their religious affiliation accounted for 87.40% of the town population or 2,911 people. This is more than 20% higher than the national figure of 67.30%. The 'No Religion' category in West Wyalong was a low 5.30% compared to the national figure of 15.35%. Similarly, the 'Not stated/undefined' category in West Wyalong was 7.00% compared to 11.55% nationally.

This strong Christian affiliation in West Wyalong needs to be juxtaposed with the church participation figures for the town. According to the estimates given by the town clergy (*see Interviews on pages 6 & 7*) there is an average Sunday attendance for the combined Christian churches of between 300 – 450. Using the upper end of this estimate, there is an average weekly church attendance of 450 in a town where 2,911 people choose 'Christian' as their religious affiliation. And this choice is not generic but specific to a particular Christian denomination (*see ABS Religious Affiliation table on page 28, Appendix A*), though clearly at a nominal level.

West Wyalong is a town of strong Christian tradition and affiliation but mediocre church participation. West Wyalong is typical of the Australian paradox of private faith versus public worship.

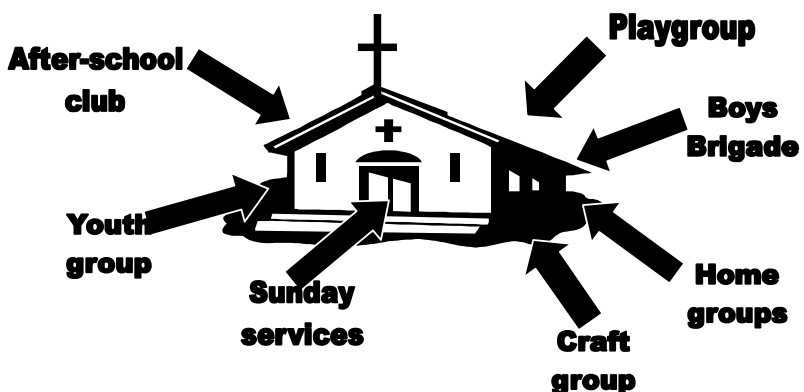
From a church planting perspective, there is a significant unchurched or dechurched proportion of the West Wyalong population that could and should be the focus of an intentional church planting strategy.

Finding the right ministry model

At this point in time, there are four ministry models that could be used in a new church plant at West Wyalong.

Traditional model

The traditional model aims at creating diversity in the way we attract people to church. It looked like this:



It is building centred and programme dominated to create as many doors or points of entry to the life of the church as possible. Every activity is an entry point to the church. It requires a lot of workers, adequate resources and, of course, a pastor who often conceives the ideas and coordinates their operation, week by week. Now, there's nothing particularly wrong with this model if you have all the components necessary to make it work. The difficulty arises when you don't have a building or the workers or the resources or, for that matter, the pastor to make it happen. Which, of course, is the situation in many rural communities. But because this is our modus operandi: the absence of buildings or programmes or a pastor can mean you're not a "real" church, and many rural churches feel inadequate and inferior to their larger city and suburban cousins.

Sadly, the problem is not the inadequacy of our country churches but the inadequacy of the model by which churches are measured. While ever buildings and programmes, and pastors, have centre stage, then rural congregations will always feel they don't measure up.

The need is to change from one model and create many models for church. The following may be more appropriate, particularly for church planting if we don't want to perpetuate the problem of small, under-resourced, struggling churches.

Bivocational Model

Bivocational ministry is a new but old model of ministry. The methodology is well-established missiologically, with our own GlobalInteraction (ABMS) utilizing this method of ministry under the umbrella of SFI. Bivocational ministry is also well established in the United States of America where it has been operating for more than a hundred years. Baptist denominations including the American Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, Presbyterians and Episcopalians have all developed bivocational ministry as a means of planting new churches and sustaining rural and urban churches.

Bivocational

one calling, two vocations

A pastor who derives the majority of his/her income from sources outside the church where he/she serves, usually from paid employment, full or part-time.

What bivocational ministry does is to strengthen the role and function of the congregation because in a bivocational church the congregation is central to ministry. The fact that the pastor is fulfilling a double calling on his life means that he can't do everything and in a bivocational church is not expected to. The US experience has been that bivocational churches experience greater congregational involvement than churches with fully-funded pastors. A survey by the SBC in the early 90's revealed that churches with bivocational pastors had 4.1 baptisms for every 100 members compared to churches with fully funded pastors which had 3.8 baptisms for every 100 members.

By necessity bivocational pastors must be equippers of the people of God for they do not have the time to do all the work of ministry. In the American experience, bivocational pastors are not experts in every facet of ministry, for the most part, they have not had the privilege of a thorough theological education. They are simply practitioners of the pastoral gift and thus, by default, often fulfil a more biblical approach to the pastoral function.

Bivocational ministry has many advantages:

- it is self-supporting
- it releases church finances
- it produces long-term pastorates
- it provides community connection
- it allows recruitment from a larger resource pool
- it encourages greater congregational participation
- it helps to restore a more biblical approach to ministry
- it is cost-effective and
- it provides a new mechanism to increase the size and diversity of church staff.

However, bivocational ministry also creates some new challenges:

- it is a different model, challenging some of our beliefs about the nature and function of the pastoral ministry.
- it requires a different training regime
- it necessitates a new approach to pastoral recruitment and
- it can create a false dichotomy between fully-funded and bivocational pastors.

Also, and importantly, Baptist ecclesiology means we face less difficulties than other denominations in the use of bivocational and other ministry models. Those denominations with a sacramental view of the ministry are compelled to restrict ministry function to those trained, ordained and authorised by their respective synods and councils. Baptists face no such restrictions and are free to develop a range of ministry models, including the use of bivocational pastors.

Bivocational ministry can provide some of the solutions to the problems we face.

(For a full discussion on Bivocational ministry and its application to the Australian context, see "The Other Face of Ministry" Report by Dr. David Jones. Available from Baptist Rural Support Services. Contact details on p.3 of this document)

The SEED Church model

Lay-led - Simple And Effective

- S...servant-led by any everyday Christian God wants to use
- E...essential functions only: friendship, worship, servanthood, evangelism, discipleship
- E...equipping believers to be the “Body of Christ” wherever they are
- D...duplicating itself intentionally

By design SEED CHURCHES are relationship based and do not require funds. They meet in free space and have no financial considerations other than how they want to use or give away their offerings to meet needs and support missions.

Like a living micro-organism...a SEED CHURCH can penetrate and infectiously influence a pocket of people, however small or unnoticed they may be. It can meet anytime, anyplace and multiply like a healthy epidemic of new life. Such churches can saturate and change a community. A SEED church aims to grow to around 30 adults.

The Weekly Gathering of a SEED church - it is healthy to build the five functions of a church into each gathering on a regular basis (some functions may happen weekly, others monthly). E.B. Brooks says, “If a group of people is doing everything a church is supposed to do, then call it a church!” So, what is a church supposed to do? Five functions are commonly considered the New Testament building blocks of a complete church – Worship, Evangelism, Ministry (servanthood), Discipleship, Fellowship (friendship). That’s all. If a group is doing those five things it is a church, irrespective of its size or where it meets.

- **Evangelism**...through testimonies; God's Word; personal relationships
- **Discipleship**...through God's Word, mentoring of individuals, being the Body of Christ daily
- **Worship**...through God's Word; praise; prayer; giving
- **Servanthood**...through mutual support in crisis; special projects
- **Friendship**...a by-product of the other four!

Also, the Lord’s Supper and Baptism become meaningful parts of church life together.

Growth in a SEED CHURCH occurs almost exclusively through relationship connections. Someone brings a friend or family member, and they like it and bring a friend themselves. In these close relationships it is easier to notice when someone needs a hand, a prayer, or a gesture of encouragement. Flyers and events are rarely effective because the nature of a SEED CHURCH is such that someone would be interested only because a person they know tells them about it. But then, relationships are the best outreach tool ever devised!

Such a church can “fit” almost anywhere...in a home, apartment, park, storefront, carport, or factory/office staff room or meal room.

Your SEED CHURCH should be shaped to reach the “pocket” of people God is pressing to your heart. You can focus on a common occupation or interest, a life-style, an extended family, a traffic pattern of people, a life need, a socio-economic strata, etc.

Examples include:

- mobile home residents
- multihousing families/playground
- cowboys/arena
- employee/ breakroom
- coffeehouse crowd
- teens/gangs/parking lots
- truckers/truck stop
- abused women
- cyclists/joggers/walkers/park
- fishermen/dock
- park pavilion
- little athletic families
- single parents
- disadvantaged/distribution site
- golfers/clubhouse
- race track enthusiasts

- wherever God leads you!

The place you meet depends on the needs of the group, but usually the “place” and “group” just naturally go together. Remember, the geography is not so important...the relationships are critically important. The place you meet is just for the convenience of the group you want to reach. Usually, there are no “drop-ins” to a SEED CHURCH. People only come because someone cares about them and brings them.

- ▶ **Lack of start-up funds is not a problem...**because no money is needed if (a) they are meeting in free space like a home, park, or apartment and (b) their shepherd is a volunteer. As they practice Christian giving, even if only a very few make up the core of such a church their funds are adequate. They’ll probably just give it all away anyway!
- ▶ **Many Bible teachers, deacons, and Christian leaders** in existing churches already have the skills to teach, care for, and nurture such a group. They would blossom with such an opportunity to serve the Lord...investing their lives in others while keeping their regular jobs. And, all this, with the blessing and prayer support of their existing Church Family.
- ▶ **The population facts are overwhelming.** In almost every community, even small towns, if everyone tried to go to church on the same Sunday about 3 out of 4 persons wouldn’t have a place to sit. Our church buildings cannot hold everyone who is out there...not even close!
- ▶ **It worked well in the book of Acts**

(For a full discussion on the SEED church model, see “Church Planting in Rural NSW” – a report to the Baptist Union of Australia. Report by Dr. David Jones. Available from Baptist Rural Support Services. Contact details on p.3 of this document)

House Church Model

There is currently a phenomenon sweeping the world called 'house church'. It has been said that more Christians worldwide belong to house churches than any other kind of church. Studies show that the most rapid church planting movements today use small home gatherings (*David Garrison, Church Planting Movements, p.35*). Those of us who take seriously Christ's directive to make disciples of all nations might well ask what lessons can be learned from the house church movement.

WHAT IS A HOUSE CHURCH?

A house church is not simply a prayer group or Bible study group familiar to most Christians today. Although there is much in common between them, a house church is not even a cell group, which belongs to a pyramid structure with a senior minister at the top. Different from traditional congregations dotting our western landscape – with a building, career clergy, lots of expensive programs, and the main Sunday morning service – house churches are an attempt to get back to the basics of Christian community.

Stated positively, house churches are fully functioning churches in and of themselves, with the freedom to partake of the Lord's Supper, baptise, marry, bury and exercise discipline. They are lay-led and meet in homes in groups of 10-30 people for prayer and worship, Bible study and discussion, mentoring and outreach, as well as food and fun. Because they are typically autonomous, they more easily adapt to persecution and growth, but are also more vulnerable to bad theology and behaviour. Consequently, many voluntarily become part of a house church network for health, stability, and accountability. If this sounds like the next new fad being promoted by reactionaries and misfits, think again; house churches have a long and noble history.

To fulfil the Great Commission in the face of global population growth, we need to get smaller to grow bigger.

- ***Efficient*** – house churches are simple, inexpensive, and adaptable and can be especially effective in regions characterised by persecution and poverty.
- ***Equal Opportunity*** – since the Reformation there has been mainly a theoretical assent to the Biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers. With their participative and interactive nature, both house churches and cell groups are able to practically release so-called lay people to utilise their spiritual gifts.
- ***Entropy*** – autonomous groups are often precursors to cults and sects. As such, to maintain health (doctrinal and behavioural) and prevent instability (scattering and

insularity), house churches in particular need to be involved in relational accountability networks with others of like mind. This will also prevent the pride and prejudice that often accompanies those involved in something new. Traditional churches, hopefully, will welcome the emergence of house churches as a divine renewal agent for the health of the entire Body of Christ, rather than persecuting it as in times past.

*(Reproduced from The Free Methodist Herald
article by Rad Zdero)*

A primary consideration in the use of the House Church model is the need to create a network structure to provide leadership training, protection, accountability and healthy growth. As stated earlier, because house churches are typically autonomous, they are also more vulnerable to bad theology and behaviour. Consequently, many voluntarily become part of a house church network. The creation of an Australian House Church Network auspiced by each of the State Baptist Unions or the Baptist Union of Australia would provide a necessary structure for the prudent use of this model of church planting.

Bivocational churches, Lay-led (SEED) Churches and House Churches provide just three models for planting a new church at West Wyalong.

The cost of planting new churches under the traditional model of a fully-funded pastor or church planter is no longer viable and will continue to restrict and retard our church planting efforts, particularly in rural areas.

The principle: *we need to get smaller to grow bigger* is amazingly simple and wonderfully attractive but it challenges much that we have been taught over the last several decades under the guise of the church growth movement. This I believe will be our greatest challenge. Are we able to accept 12 people meeting weekly in a lounge room as authentically the Church of Jesus Christ? Not a home group from a local church nor even a group on the way to becoming a church but fully functioning churches in and of themselves. Are we able to accept that deacons, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders or even the person who hands out the hymn books in my local church is capable and able to lead a SEED church or a house church even though he or she has had no formal theological training? Can we comprehend Baptist churches without career clergy, without purpose-built chapels, without programmes to fill the days and nights of each and every week? This is the challenge. It's not about more money or more pastors or more trained workers or more programmes. It's about less. Because with less we can do more to reach the lost in rural Australia.

The right church planting model for West Wyalong

The simplest and most reasonable means to commence a church plant in West Wyalong is to employ the House Church model. It may be that this could multiply into a number of house church congregations in various parts of the township and surrounding villages and/or develop further using the SEED Church model. Further development would be the decision of the House Church congregation in consultation with BRSS and MSD.

Suggested actions:

- **Circulation of this report to –**
 - **Rural Ministry Taskforce**
 - **Ministry Support & Development Council**
 - **Riverina Baptist Association**
 - **Riverina Regional Superintendent**

- **Endorsement of this report for the planting of a Baptist Church in West Wyalong, NSW.**

- **Establishment of a West Wyalong Consultative Team to oversee this project. Suggested composition of Team: Representatives from RMT and RBA, Scott Pilgrim, David Jackson, David Jones and any others thought appropriate**

- **Approval for BRSS to undertake the following actions:**
 - **Commencement of recruitment process to secure a lay-leader for West Wyalong House Church**

 - **Preparation of draft guidelines for the establishment of a House Church network auspiced by the Baptist Union of NSW**

 - **Further preparatory work in West Wyalong**

 - **Whatever other work the Consultative Team may feel is appropriate**

- **Report to the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of NSW**