

Chapter 4

Australia



Australia; this is where it all began for us as a mission. Our roots can be traced back to the 19th century in this nation, and the ministry has continued to flourish up to the present day! The early history of Open Air Campaigners is recorded in Jim Duffecy's book, "Truceless Warfare Advances," which was published in 1983. Since that time, notable changes have occurred in the OAC ministry worldwide, as well as in this country of its origin.

One such change in Australia has been the decision to be known as OAC Ministries rather than Open Air Campaigners. At the very beginning of our history, in 1892, we were known as The New South Wales Prayer Band, led by English barrister E.P. Field, who preached to lunch-hour crowds in Martin Place, Sydney. In 1922, the name was changed to Open Air Campaigners. At this time, gospel wagons were used to reach out across New South Wales and, after WWII, to the rest of Australia. It was during this period that the typical sketchboard-painting method became the 'trademark' of our work for many years. Ministry expanded to New Zealand, North America, and Europe during the 1950s and '60s under the leadership of our first international president, Jim Duffecy. In 1982, due to a growing number of opportunities to conduct ministry in a wide variety of venues in addition to the open air, OAC Australia became OAC Ministries (OACM).



Today, OAC Ministries reaches out to the community with messages of hope. We aim to serve local communities, churches, and families through communicating Christian tenets, principles, and values. Our presentations always explain the core of the Christian faith, with practical implications. We are still in the open air, and many other places, too, always taking the gospel out to where the people are, just as we have done throughout our long history. Our motto, "Good News in Good Ways," has been implemented to

emphasize our burden to share the story of Jesus, as shown in the Bible. We focus on God's desire to connect and restore people to Himself using presentations that are understandable, engaging, interactive, and adaptable for a wide variety of ages and situations.

OACM branch locations currently include Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, and Victoria. Australia's population of around 27 million is spread out over a country the size of the continental USA. Cities like Perth and Adelaide (South Australia) are very isolated but still have populations in excess of a million.



BRIGHT BEACH MISSION OUTREACH

Quicker and more colorful presentations are possible this way. Creative object lessons have been developed, and electronic presentations are proving effective as well. The use of puppets and drama have become widespread and well-received. Additional outreach venues include schools (primary and secondary) in most, but not all, Australian states, where the potential exists to reach a whole new generation with the gospel.

Another effective outreach method, conducted in conjunction with local churches, is known as "Community Contact Weeks." These ministry meetings include breakfasts, five-day children's



ONE-ON-ONE COUNSELING

Jim Duffecy's adage is still true: "You don't catch fish in a bathtub; you have to go where the fish are!" People are still being reached in public spaces here in Australia, but the specific venues have changed over the years.

Methods have also changed to keep pace with the times. The sketchboard remains an effective tool, but chalk on specially designed paper is often used instead of paint.



MISSION TEAMS REACH OUT IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



MINISTERING IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

International through Rob George. Rob started his ministry with OAC as a volunteer worker in 1972. He eventually came on staff, served for many years, and was elected as the OACI vice-president in 2002. In 2008, he received approval from our international leadership to serve as an OAC international evangelist. In 2012, he was elected president and has been the most-traveled OACI president to date! His goal was to visit every single OACI branch in each of his four-year terms. He was able to troubleshoot issues in the branches and provide much unity to the work. In 2020, after serving for eight successful years as the OACI president, Rob passed the leadership gavel to OAC Ecuador director, David Proaño, and is now able to turn his attention, with increased focus, to the ministry God has given him in Australia.

Looking back, we are grateful to God for the long-term staff He has provided through the years, which has been important in the stability of the work. Dawn Freeman was our incredibly efficient and significant national administrator for 25 years, serving from 1993 to 2018. Merv and Ngaire Jensen (Victoria), Rob and Cecile Adams (Western Australia), Wes and Di Fittell (retired), and Jim and Grace Vine (retired), along with Rob and Gayle George (South Australia) have all served in one capacity or another for more than 40 years. Alan Bailey served the Lord with us for 48 years, from 1959 to 2007!

clubs, and school assemblies. They are held on "neutral ground" such as community halls, restaurants, and homes, but not in churches themselves.

OACM also offers training workshops focused on helping folks excel in evangelism, practical outreach, and ministry skills, including sketchboard, visual aids, and puppets. Like training seminars elsewhere in the world, actual outreach is included.

Australia is also deeply involved in the affairs of Open Air Campaigners



SKILLED VOLUNTEERS HELP OAC REACH OUT

Looking at our current ministry, evangelism staff include Neil Clark (New South Wales), Rob and Gayle George (South Australia), Stephanie Jordan (Queensland), Sean Marsh (Queensland), Lauren Palmer (Victoria), Mike Peereboom (Australian Capital Territory), Steve Stokes (Victoria), Andrew and Catherine Walkington (Queensland), and Andrew McLauchlan (Queensland).



JASON POTTER

In May of 2022, Jason Potter became the director of OAC in Australia. He is an experienced leader, author, pastor, and educator who began his leadership journey at 17 when he was elected to the board of Belconnen Church of Christ in Canberra. Jason resides in Canberra with his lovely wife, Rachelle. His leadership team includes Shamina R, Carlene L, Melinda Bott, Grace Darby, and James M.

In recent years, SALT has been a new initiative started by OAC in Canberra. This quarterly outreach and evangelism forum is an opportunity to gather believers from all over Canberra who desire to stimulate their missional imagination and further develop their gospel fluency – that we may all be inspired and equipped to share the Good News in Good Ways.



USING VISUALS TO ILLUSTRATE SPIRITUAL TRUTH

Looking ahead, we trust God for our future and are confident He will guide and provide, as He has faithfully done since the very beginning.



GOD HAS GIVEN US A WONDERFUL TEAM OF FAITHFUL SERVANTS

