



THE FLOODS
CAME



AWARD FOR
CASINO



TCL GOES TO
MONGOLIA

The Northern Light

JULY 2017



“and the rains came
down as the flood came
up”

It was the last day of March, 2017 as the heavens opened over Lismore and right across the catchment areas feeding into the Wilsons river.

Some were predicting this would be ‘the big one’ we have been expecting for decades. Others were monitoring the river levels upstream and saying the levee wall would hold and the peak would not breach the magic figure of 10.6 metres.

Many people in the CBD just waited and watched throughout the day as more than 20 inches of rain fell on Lismore (in addition the the 20 inches which fell over the previous two weeks!).

Most people waited too long and the levee was not only breached, the flood waters were almost a metre above the levee and Lismore was hit with the worst flood in over 40 years.

Our team of workers at Lismore Regional Mission is a lot smaller than the last time this happened and so we were only able to lift some items upstairs before the SES ordered us out of the city and closed the roads.

We waited too long, like so many others.

Over the next 12 hours we watched and waited as our inner

city, including our Church complex appeared to just sink beneath this great inland ocean.

The water stopped rising early Friday morning and photos began to come through.

We soon realised that in spite of being almost a metre above the rest of the CBD, the damage sustained to the Worship Centre,

Red Dove Cafe, Op Shop and the Richmond Room was severe.

Our Senior Minister, Rev. Robert Griffith was the first person to enter the mud-soaked property at 6am on Sunday 2nd March.

The water had only just receded and the flood level was higher than waist level right through the main complex and about head height in the Op Shop.

The clean-up began immediately as well over 50 tonnes of ruined furniture, cafe equipment, carpet and almost the entire contents of the Op Shop were re-located to the footpaths and the rear carpark for removal by the local Council over the following two weeks.

The damage has been severe and the cost will be measured in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

A Flood Recovery Task Force was established and we have worked really hard to get the Red Dove Cafe open again and to bring all our hall users back onsite.

The next challenge will be the Op Shop and then finally, we will turn our attention to the Worship Centre.

That will be a much larger challenge and our whole congregation will be involved in deciding how our primary worship space will be rebuilt.

We have been worshipping in 'The Upper Room' since the flood and that has been a wonderful change for so many of our congregation.

The positive comments and reflections continue to pour in regarding the intimacy and increased fellowship and sense of unity in the smaller space.

We have run out of Newsletters and chairs on more than one occasion already as our numbers grow and our journey continues.

We have been overwhelmed by the support we have received from individuals inside and outside the Church and across the nation.

Many of our brothers and sisters in the Uniting Church has raised money to support the flood recovery in Lismore and we have been so blessed to know we are part of a much larger family.

The 'silver lining' on this enormous cloud is shining brighter every day as the Lord opens our hearts and draws us together as the family of God.

It will be a very long recovery, but the ministry which is unfolding in and through this unwelcome upheaval in our lives has been truly amazing - and that should not surprise us, for we all know that, "... God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

There will be a special congregation meeting held in August to determine the way forward for our Worship Centre and we expect work to commence on the refurbishment in September.

The project will be a huge one and we do not expect to be returning to the Worship Centre until early next year.

Before the world was even created, God knew exactly what would be happening in our city, our Church and our lives at this time and He has positioned the right people in the right place at the right time to make the right decisions and to achieve

His mission to advance His kingdom in Lismore and beyond.

The mission of Christ was not impeded by this flood, it was actually released once more in our midst and across our city.

To God be the glory - great things He has done!

AND IN MURWILLUMBAH

Although flooding is part of our environmental landscape, such devastation hadn't been seen for a long time.

Unlike Lismore Uniting Church, along with other buildings in the city, which was inundated with the water and the mud, Murwillumbah Uniting in its very nature of position didn't suffer any flood damage.

However, the surrounding landscape south of the Tweed River and Tumbulgum to its north was ravaged by the volume and velocity of the water. Geoff Smith, one of our members, owns a business on the south side of the river and like every other business owners and house holders there, felt its effects.

Two (2) staff members from the Uniting Preschool, Murwillumbah, together with at least four (4) Preschool families had extensive damage and loss.

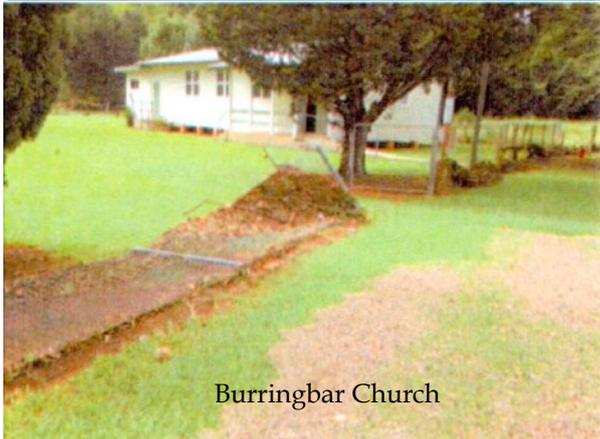
In the aftermath of the flooding, we have been assisting families who have lost homes, cars, hope and livelihoods in whatever way we can.

Burringbar UC (photo) which is situated on Tweed Valley Way, along with most businesses or households had water enter their premises that came from the Burringbar Creek.

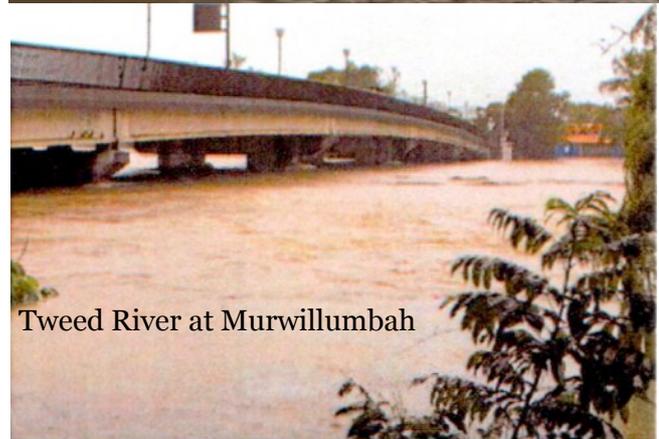
Many had never had experienced this before.

The water had such force behind it, part of the front fence of the Church property which is not that close to the creek, was knocked over.





Burringbar Church



Tweed River at Murwillumbah



SEVENTEEN years after Winifred Playford first volunteered to drive Carrie Kennedy to see her doctor, the two women have become firm friends.

"She never lost her cool," Mrs Kennedy says, describing the time she suddenly felt chest pains on her way home from hospital and had to be returned immediately, "and Winifred didn't leave the hospital until my daughter got there."

"Carrie said 'I'll be right, just take me home' but I said 'no, you stay right here'," Mrs Playford says, placing her hand over Mrs Kennedy's.

"When Winifred says 'stay here', well, there's no use arguing," Mrs Kennedy says with a laugh and Shirley Smith, Mrs Playford's fellow founder of the Uniting Care Transport Team, joins in.

The three women have stopped briefly en route to Lismore Base Hospital, where Mrs Kennedy is due for a regular specialist appointment.

She has to go "a fair bit", she says.

Mrs Kennedy lives about 30km away in Casino and doesn't have her own means of transport.

She has family on the Northern Rivers but her daughter earns a living in Lismore and cannot afford to miss work to chauffeur her mother.

It's a familiar scenario for most patients relying on Casino's transport team: They're in a small town where specialist medical services and public transport are almost non-existent.

"The 2.30am train pulls into Brisbane at 5am," says Mrs Smith, "then patients who are already unwell have to find transport from Roma St to wherever the medical services are and catch a 2.30pm bus back, getting in at 6pm."

Getting to the Casino train station at 2.30am is not easy, either.

Patients can book taxis but getting drivers out of bed in the early morning hours is a challenge, the women say.

When a local government transport sub-committee held a meeting on access, disability and transport in Casino nearly 20 years ago, Mrs Smith went "to investigate".

She had driven for a government-funded group now known as HART, which offers similar services to those of the Casino team.

The team is ineligible for government funding, Mrs Smith says, because it's officially considered a "duplicate" of HART.

But there are crucial differences and Mrs Smith says the two organisations work "hand in glove so that the whole community can be covered".

Funding for HART comes with strict rules, Mrs Smith says, including a geographical limit which is the New South Wales/Queensland border.

"They ask us to go over the border," she says, referring to the regular communication she maintains with staff at HART.

Appointments for chronic medical conditions are also exempt from HART funding, says Mrs Smith, as are pick-ups from nursing homes.

She says volunteer drivers from the team often collect patients from nursing homes in Kyogle, Coraki, Casino, Lismore and elsewhere on the Northern Rivers.

"It does worry people like me if it goes down the drain.

What would happen?" Mrs Kennedy says.

The organisation runs on community donations and fundraisers - there will be a Lamington drive in March - and recently qualified for a \$3800 council grant.

Demand for the service has increased by more than 6000% since Mrs Playford and Mrs Smith undertook their first trip on November 8, 1999, when drivers used to travel in pairs.

Mrs Smith says 53 volunteers now cover a range of duties including administration, management, fundraising, driving and a 24-hour telephone response service.

"Elderly people don't like talking to answering machines," Mrs Playford says.

Mrs Smith no longer drives and says Mrs Playford is "the last of the Mohicans" for original volunteer drivers.

This year the group will employ its first paid administration officer and will no doubt need to sell a lot of Lamingtons.

Mrs Smith said anyone interested in volunteering was invited to call [02 6662 7940](tel:0266627940) and to ask for Janelle or Sandra.

Story and pictures originally published in the Northern Star Permission to reproduce obtained

Earlier this year the Uniting Casino Transport Team received the Premier's Award for service to the community

This is the first time such an award has been presented to a Casino organisation.



PETER BOUGHEY'S 'TOYS CHANGE LIVES' MESSAGE REACHES MONGOLIA

THE opening of new store front premises in Casino, for 'Toys Change Lives' has caused officials in Mongolia to become aware of the service

The move from Peter's garage to store front premises in Casino took place in May

And from the get go, it has been all hands on deck.

Already a painting by one of the workers has reached Mongolia.

The painting, in Aboriginal colours, was bought by the director of the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability.

Dr Peter Hayes

It was then received at the Nuclear Non Proliferation and Disarmament meeting held in Ulaan Baatar Mongolia, in June.

The painting was received by the Ambassador of Mongolia, Enkhsaikhan Jargalsaikhan and the former Foreign Minister Nyamosor Tuya.

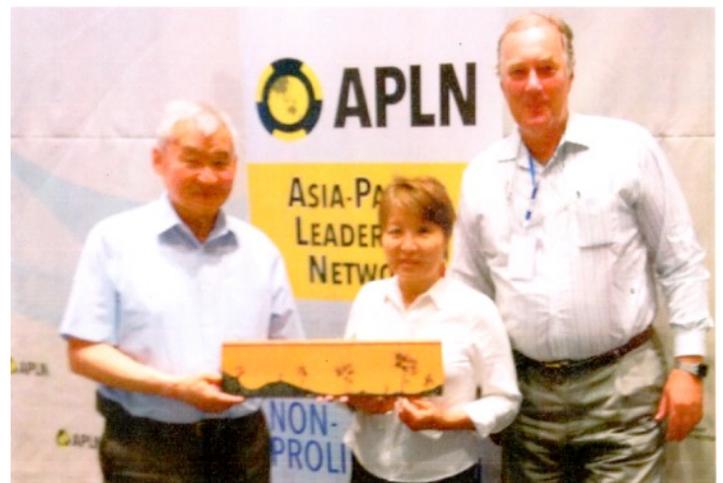
Dr Hayes, who is also an honorary professor at the Centre for International Security Studies at the University of

Sydney, said he hoped that this would be the beginning of a fostering of communication between the Aboriginal people of Australia and the residents of Mongolia

Dr Hayes is even considering inviting the painter, Laurence, to visit Mongolia.

The store front continues to receive many folk who just drop in.

One recent visitor was none other than Russell Crowe.





CHINDERAH on the Tweed Coast also copped the brunt of the ex cyclonic flood

Even now, months after the flood, some residents of the many caravan parks in the village, still cannot return to their vans, which were sealed after the flood as a health hazard.

Chinderah, like Tumblegum, a few miles back up river towards Murwillumbah received extensive damage . Both towns lie on the edge of the river which normally just laps the river.

But whatever happens in Murwillumbah continues on to these two places.

All residents of Tumblegum were affected and the strength of the movement of the waters caused the heavy seats outside local pub, to be pushed across land to the next street

Chinderah, which is mainly caravan parks, watched the water rise and then move through the drains to wreak havoc on the local community.

Evacuations to the Kingscliff TAFE College were put in place early on Thursday night.

Most occupants complied and had a good nights sleep in an upmarket hotel in Casuarina to the south of Kingscliff.

Others remained with their vans and many, including a Kingscliff UC Elder, lost everything in the lower part of his housing.

After a few days those evacuated were allowed to return but, as mentioned earlier, some could not enter their homes as they were declared a health hazard.

The Pacific Motorway was closed at Tweed heads South on Friday afternoon and was not opened till Saturday afternoon stranding folk from Kingscliff who had come into Tweed on the bus for shopping or other needs, as well as travellers heading south.

The State Government Disaster Network set up two Relief centres, one at Kingscliff and the other at Banora Point.

On the Friday night over 300 folk were camped down in the local High School awaiting the opening of the highway.

This included a bus load of students from Coffs Harbour High on their way home from an outing on the Gold Coast

Photos courtesy of News Limited & Tweed Daily News