



Homeland Outreach Christmas 2012

During the week between Christmas 2012 and New Year 2013, MAF Arnhem Land helped facilitate a 'Homeland Outreach' to 16 Yolŋu (Aboriginal) homelands. Seven MAF pilots, their families, MAF staff and local Christian Yolŋu from the larger communities joined together in sharing with the local homeland residents the real meaning of Christmas.

MAF Pilot and outreach organizer Fabio Zuglian states, *"Sharing the Gospel message, encouraging and fellowshiping with the people we serve are missiological fundamentals we want to engage in whenever we have the resources and the opportunity to do so."*



"Pilots, engineers and other MAF staff all need to see and to know what affect their labours in the technical world of aviation has – particularly in a place such as Arnhem Land where, due to a scarcity of missionaries, we are amongst the main representatives of Christ to the local people. Making the resources available and creating the opportunities is what Integral Ministry – as we call it – is about. That's why we do Outreaches: we have the resources, we have the opportunity, it allows us to more completely reach the people with the fullness of the Gospel – so we do it!"

The Christmas Outreach had been many months in the planning and was a complex task for Fabio and Brett Nel (MAF Arnhem Land Ministry Coordinator) but however hard it was, it was worth it! *"Wow, what great couple of days serving the homelands in this way, by doing the MAF Christmas outreach programme."* shares MAF Pilot Lisa Curran.



The Koch Family (MAF), Mandaka and Daylulu from Yirrkala community travelled with Lisa Curran to Bremmer Island, which is home to the old lady Laklak. Laklak's dream has been to have Bremmer Island as a place for her grandchildren and as a place dedicated to Jesus. It is also a second home for young guys with behavioral problems. Therefore Laklak was excited to have the team come as these boys could do with some good Biblical teaching.

Upon arrival the team gathered under the shade of a tree and reluctantly the boys attended fellowship, making every excuse why they didn't need to be there. After a time of Christmas songs and preaching in Yolŋu Matha (local language) an invitation for prayer was given.

One young Yolŋu man named Dillon stepped forward saying, *"Pray for me, sister."* Dillon is an example of many in Arnhem Land who give their lives to Jesus but the troubles of life are so great that their faith suffers.

The other young men watched intently as the team prayed for Dillon and were surprised when he said afterwards, *"I am free. I'm light."* Therefore Dillon's example lead the way for other young men to respond. Another young man had come to Bremmer Island to get away from the drink and drugs. With a heavy mind he asked the team to pray for him and he gave his life to Jesus. The heaviness lifted and much later others were heard saying, *"Look at him, that man you prayed for. He still has goose bumps and a smile!"*



Next stop for Lisa Curran's team was Dhalinbuy. There the atmosphere was not as inviting as Bremmer Island. This was clearly seen as the team gathered to sing carols and in the middle of the fellowship circle was an old lady who was extremely grumpy. The local minister spoke out, *"Pray for her, she needs it!"* Coupled with the intensive heat and atmosphere it was not easy for the MAF team, however God's name was spoken and glorified in Dhalinbuy.



At the next homeland of Wandawuy the team was greeted and quickly invited to have fellowship under a tree. One particular man joined in with the singing and loudly played the ukulele. It was out of tune but this did not matter!

The message of Christmas was shared and the invitation for prayer was given but nobody responded. Eventually someone plucked up courage to say, *"Pray for this lady. She is in a lot of pain."* This particular middle-aged lady was sick and sitting in her wheelchair. The lady was encouraged to believe for the miracle of healing and to try stand up. She struggled to her feet but stood and was able to take a short walk on her own. Eventually someone yelled out, *"Sister, she cannot walk. She has been in a wheelchair for sometime!"*



As the team continued to pray for others and lead some children to the Lord, they were able to catch a glimpse of the newly walking lady climbing the steps of the porch and sitting on the floor. She walked to a waiting vehicle and climbed in. The wheelchair was left by itself in the yard. *"We won't need to take the wheelchair because she can walk in the strength that Jesus gave her."* said the lady's brother.

Another team overnighted in Baniyala where testimonies were shared and the gospel of Luke Christmas DVD was shown in local language. *"It is wonderful to see people so open and hungry for the Gospel but there is a still huge need for ongoing support and discipleship at Baniyala Homeland."* states MAF Pilot Des Vautier.

Across to Garrthalala Homeland, Fabio Zuglian and the team sung Christmas carols, shared the message and performed a drama about the real meaning of Christmas. Everything was well accepted. One month after this outreach event, some ladies were still talking about the drama that the MAF team performed. It is clearly evident that art and drama are an effective way to convey the gospel message to the Aboriginal people.



Local people at Mirrinatja homeland were happy to have a Christmas service and to hear the message about why Jesus needed to come into the world. Special Christmas gifts were given out consisting of healthy choices of bananas or sweet tamarinds.

Those at Matamata homeland were grateful and asked, *"When are you coming again? We want you to come back!"*



MAF pilot Michael Beath had spoken to the people from Raymangirr previously to let them know the team was coming. However on the day as they arrived the homeland was empty because most had gone hunting! Michael believes that *“Even though there was no one there, our time together with a few MAF guys and two Yolngu ladies was really valuable and I trust that our prayers for their community were powerful and effective in seeing God's kingdom come in Raymangirr.”*

The above fellowship situation is a common occurrence when planning events or arranging flights with Yolngu. Different cultures, different priorities and sometimes misunderstandings mean things don't always come together as planned.

The words of Isaiah 52:7 clearly state, ***“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*** For the homeland outreach teams this is what they set out to do.

The on-going need for discipleship is huge so ministry trips like this must be repeated. Please pray for the people of Arnhem Land and for MAF in 2013 as the organisation hopes to build on these outreaches and to see individuals and communities grow closer to Jesus. The gospel is the hope for the people of Arnhem Land.

If you would like to know more about the MAF Arnhem Land Outreach program or give to the outreach fund please visit the MAF Arnhem Land website: <http://www.maf-arnhemland.org/homelandoutreach.html>

STATISTICS

- Using 6 aircraft to visit 13 homelands over a period of a week
- 14 boxes of bananas donated by the Yirrkala Banana Farm
- 40 boxes of sweet tamarinds purchased
- Hundreds of lolly bags assembled by MAF and Yolngu ladies
- Boxes of Christian literature (Bibles, comics, magazines, calendars...) given out
- Donations and Subsidies from MAF made this expensive operation possible
- Last but not least, prayer made this all possible!

