

Showing care in Jesus name for more than 100 years

The first Social Service Committee was formed in 1912 to carry on the work being done by deaconesses at the Palmer Street Church in Woolloomooloo. The work had begun in 1906, with the appointment of Miss Holland, the first deaconess. Miss Holland worked among the mothers and girls in the area, providing assistance with groceries and clothing, and bringing people into church. A sewing machine was procured for a poor woman anxious to earn her own living, a surgical support was provided for a crippled boy, a chair was found for a blind girl and classes were held for boys and girls. The Committee was formed as it was felt that "the foundation had been laid by the work of the deaconesses for a much larger movement" and there was a need for a group to be established to oversee the work.

In 1913, Dr Clouston, the Chairman of the Home Mission Committee, wrote in a report in answer to complaints that the social service work was more in the way of benevolence than the Gospel, that the 'Spiritual results of the work done by the deaconesses was very conspicuous.'

Funding the work of the Committee has never been easy, and there have been moments of financial crisis. However, God has provided and there have always been those that provide financial and practical support. For example, in 1915 a group of women from the Presbyterian Church got together saleable items and held a market with the proceeds going towards the community work of the church. The very first PWA Market Day was held to support the work of the Social Service Committee. It was reported in 1926 that 'It may be safely said that if it were not for this annual effort, the Social Service Committee would have found it very difficult to pay their way.'

In 1926 an account of the social service work over the previous twenty years was written. Reverend Victor C Bell wrote, "Almost from the inception of the work at Woolloomooloo, the Committee aspired to do great things. At different intervals... we find proposals to establish crèches, a superannuation fund for deaconesses, a training home for future workers, a hospital chaplaincy, or a home for aged women. All these are forms of social service which commend themselves to Christian people. But so far not one of them has materialised. They are still beautiful dreams. Yet dreams have a way of coming true, and the Committee is still hoping to see something concrete in the not too distant future."

In 2015, it is good to look back at this long history of showing Christ to those in need. It is good to remember that God has continued to provide for the mercy ministry of our church. We are thankful for all that we have received that allows us to give in Jesus name. We are still dreaming "beautiful dreams" and praise God for those that have become a reality.

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