



South Queensland Conference headquarters, Spring Hill, QLD, Australia.

Photo courtesy of Brett Townend.

# South Queensland Conference, South Pacific Division

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## BARRY OLIVER

Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

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## Current Territory and Statistics

The South Queensland Conference is a constituent conference of the Australian Union Conference.<sup>1</sup> Its headquarters are located at 400 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, QLD 4000, Australia. Its unincorporated activities are governed by a constitution that is based on the model conference constitution of the South Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SPD). Its real and intellectual property is held in trust by the Australasian Conference Association, Limited, an incorporated entity based at the headquarters office of the SPD in Wahroonga, NSW. The conference executive committee has transferred most of its functions to three corporations to act as trustees for the conference: Seventh-day Adventist Church (South Queensland Conference), Limited, which oversees the day-to day operations of the conference itself and was registered on March 25, 2003; Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland), Limited, which oversees the operation of the education entities within the conference and was registered on November 25, 2002; and Seventh-day Adventist Aged Care (South Queensland), Limited, which oversees the operation of the nursing homes and retirement centers within the territory of the conference and was registered on March 25, 2003.<sup>2</sup>

The territory of the South Queensland Conference is “that portion of Queensland situated south of a straight line parallel with the 22nd degree of south latitude commencing from the coast at a point immediately south of St. Lawrence, and running due west between Winton and Muttaborra and north of Boulia to a point on the border of the Northern Territory.”<sup>3</sup>

In the *2017 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, the South Queensland Conference was listed as having 81 churches and 15 companies. Church membership at the end of 2016 was 12,232, making it the largest conference by membership in Australia.<sup>4</sup> The conference had 976 active employees. Its tithe receipts for 2016 totaled US\$10,311,173. Its tithe and offerings per capita were US\$1343.59.<sup>5</sup>

## Schools of the South Queensland Conference

Brisbane Adventist College. Located at 303A Broadwater Road, Mansfield, QLD 4503. Originally when opened in 1966, the school was an elementary school known as Southside Adventist Primary School.<sup>6</sup> The school currently has both elementary and secondary campuses and offers education from preparatory grade to grade 12. It also has a child-care center.

Coral Coast Adventist School. Located at Walters Street Bundaberg, QLD 4670. Land for the school was purchased in 1979, and it was opened shortly thereafter.<sup>7</sup> The school is an elementary school.<sup>8</sup>

Darling Downs Christian School. Located at 451 McDougall Street, Toowoomba, QLD 4350. Formerly known as the Toowoomba Adventist Primary School, the original campus was opened in March 1942. It was located on Perth Street, Toowoomba. In July 1956 the school moved to 135 Hume Street, Toowoomba. In May 1966 two

new brick classrooms were completed beside the existing timber classroom. In 1982 the school moved again, this time to Charnley Street in western Toowoomba. The school moved to its current campus in 2001 and was renamed Darling Downs Christian School. It offers preparatory grade to grade 12.<sup>9</sup>

Gold Coast Christian College. Located at 7/9 Bridgman Drive, Reedy Creek, QLD 4227. It commenced operations in 1982. It offers preparatory grade to grade 12.<sup>10</sup>

Ipswich Adventist School. Located at 56 Hunter Street, Brassal, QLD 4305. This school opened in 1968. It is an elementary school.<sup>11</sup>

Noosa Christian College. Located at 20 Cooroy-Belli Creek Road, Cooroy, QLD 4563.

The school officially commenced operation on January 28, 2003, with 37 students in classes for preparatory grade to grade 6. In 2007 secondary classes commenced, with the addition of grade 8. In 2011 the first grade 12 class graduated from the school. In 2017 NCC opened its early learning center, which houses both preparatory and Kindergarten classrooms and play areas.<sup>12</sup>

Northpine Christian College. Located at 29 Hughes Road East, Dakabin, QLD 4503. The original school was located at 74 Dunsford Street, Zillmere, on the site of the Zillmere campground. The school was destroyed by fire on February 21, 1978.<sup>13</sup> A new elementary school was opened on the current site on August 17, 1980. It was named Pine Rivers Adventist Primary School.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of 1986 the school became a junior secondary school and was renamed Brisbane North Adventist College.<sup>15</sup> Grade 11 was added in 1996, and then grade 12 in 1997.<sup>16</sup> In the late 1990s the current name of Northpine Christian College was adopted. There is a child-care center associated with the college.

## Nursing Home and Retirement Facilities<sup>17</sup>

Caloundra Adventist Retirement Village.<sup>18</sup> Located at 64 Sunset Drive, Little Mountain, QLD 4551. The village was opened in 1996. Standard care, respite care, dementia care, and palliative care is available.<sup>19</sup> A hostel was opened on May 26, 1996.<sup>20</sup> It is now a nursing home, with 48 beds. There are 39 independent living units.<sup>21</sup>

Capricorn Adventist Retirement Village. Located at 150 Rockhampton Road, Yeppoon, QLD 4703. Standard care, respite care, dementia care, and palliative care are all available.<sup>22</sup> There are 250 independent living units on site.<sup>23</sup> There 66 beds available in the residential care facility, with 12 dedicated to dementia patients.<sup>24</sup>

Melody Park Retirement Resort. Located at 261 Gilston Road, Nerang, QLD 4211. Standard care, respite care, dementia care and palliative care are available.<sup>25</sup> Established in 1988, it has 46 independent living units.<sup>26</sup> A hostel was opened on May 16, 2000.<sup>27</sup> Now known as a residential care facility, it has 40 beds.<sup>28</sup>

Victoria Point Adventist Retirement Village. Located at 571 Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, Victoria Point, QLD 4165. Standard care, respite care, dementia care and palliative care are available.<sup>29</sup> It has 154 independent living

units.<sup>30</sup> Colocated on site with the independent living units is a residential facility with 179 residential places, 20 of those dedicated for residents with memory impairment and dementia.<sup>31</sup> This retirement facility was established with the completion of a 30-bed nursing home in September 1980.<sup>32</sup>

## Camps

Maranatha Youth Camp. Located at Wappa Falls Road, Yandina, QLD. The camp was opened in 1946 and continued to operate until 1986, when a decision was taken that maintenance costs were too high.<sup>33</sup>

Somerset Youth Camp. Located at 1180 Stanley Pocket Road, Crossdale, QLD 4312. The camp was developed over an extended period, beginning with the purchase of land at Somerset Dam and appointment of a Somerset Development Committee in 1988.<sup>34</sup> In September 1999 it was reported that the facility was “near completion.”<sup>35</sup> The central complex has self-contained cabins, an air-conditioned multipurpose hall, and a commercial kitchen. Facilities include a swimming pool and deck, and tennis and basketball courts.<sup>36</sup> Bush camping options along the three kilometers of waterfront onto Somerset Dam are available. Each waterfront camping location has environmentally friendly composting toilets and access to showers inside the main property of Camp Somerset.<sup>37</sup>

Watson Park Convention Centre.<sup>38</sup> Located at 337 Old Gympie Road, Dakabin, QLD 4503. The annual convention (camp meeting) of the South Queensland Conference has been held on this site since 1962.<sup>39</sup>

## Adventist Book Centers

Adventist Book Center, Dakabin. The South Queensland Conference operates an Adventist Book Centre, formerly known as a Book and Bible House, at Watson Park, 337 Old Gympie Road, Dakabin, QLD 4503.

Christian Life Resources. Located at 2422 Logan Road, Eight Mile Plains, QLD 4113.

## The Origins of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Queensland, Australia

At the Australian Seventh-day Adventist Conference held in 1893, it was recognized with some urgency that something needed to be done about commencing the work of the Church in Queensland. The following was voted:

WHEREAS, The withdrawal of Elder Curtis together with the protracted absence of Elder Tenney has reduced our number of laborers in this field, and whereas there are two large colonies, viz., Queensland and Western Australia, which ought to be entered at once, and whereas the Australian Conference has neither the means nor the men at its disposal, therefore— Resolved, That we petition the Foreign Mission Board to assist us to enter

these promising fields without delay.<sup>40</sup>

Literature evangelists had already been working in the colony of Queensland before this action was taken. It was reported at the conference in 1893 that “when the work began, the staff only consisted of seven agents, three in Queensland, and four in New South Wales.”<sup>41</sup> One of those literature evangelists was William E. Wainman, who was in attendance at the conference.<sup>42</sup>

The first ministers to be assigned to Queensland were G. B. Starr and A. S. Hiscox. *The Bible Echo* reported in June 1894 that “on Wednesday, June 6, Elder G. B. Starr and wife left Sydney on the steamer *Wodonga* for Queensland. They will spend a week at Brisbane, and then proceed to Rockhampton to visit the company of Sabbathkeepers who have never seen any of our ministers. After visiting the above places, they will decide on a location for a series of tents meetings. They will then be joined by A. S. Hickox and wife, who are now laboring at Seven Hills, N.S.W. We believe that the providence of God has gone before us in Queensland, and we shall await with deep interest the results of the first series of tent meetings in that colony.”<sup>43</sup>

In fact, Starr and Hiscox conducted the evangelistic program in the city of Rockhampton commencing in July 1894.<sup>44</sup> Starr reported that “the first series of meetings on present truth in this colony opened Thursday evening, July 26, in the tent erected for the purpose at the corner of Denham and George Streets, Rockhampton, a very central and in other ways excellent location. Two hundred and eight persons were present.”<sup>45</sup>

As a result of the evangelistic meetings, the first church to be organized in Queensland was in Rockhampton. On Sabbath, October 20, 1894, the Rockhampton Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized, with 28 members. On October 28, 17 more persons were baptized and added to the church, raising the membership to 45.<sup>46</sup> From Rockhampton, Starr moved on to Toowoomba.<sup>47</sup>

By the beginning of 1895, churches had been organized, not only on Rockhampton but also in North Brisbane, South Brisbane, and Toowoomba.<sup>48</sup>

Many significant events have transpired during the time since the Seventh-day Adventist Church commenced work in Queensland. For example, commencing in 1927, evangelist Roy Allan Anderson conducted a three-year public evangelistic program in Brisbane, the capital of Queensland.<sup>49</sup> Anderson pioneered what was to become the hallmark of Adventist public evangelism over the next forty years. He combined the presentation of biblical themes with major choral renditions.<sup>50</sup> At the 1929 Queensland camp meeting Anderson reported on the two-and-one-half-year outreach program that had averaged 1,200 per night in attendance, and had 202 baptisms to date and another 60 persons preparing for baptism.<sup>51</sup>

In the years that followed, such evangelists as Coltheart, Burnside, and Kent conducted major citywide programs in Brisbane.

## The Organizational History of the South Queensland Conference

A Queensland Mission was organized on January 24, 1895.<sup>52</sup> In 1896 the Australasian Union Conference appointed G. B. Starr as superintendent, Alfred Hughes as secretary, and Mrs. Nellie Starr as treasurer.<sup>53</sup> The fledgling organization remained as a mission until October 20, 1899, when at a meeting held at Toowoomba, Queensland, under the chair of Australasian Union Conference president A. G. Daniells, the attendees adopted a constitution, and the mission became a conference.<sup>54</sup> There were four churches in the conference: Rockhampton, North Brisbane, South Brisbane, and Toowoomba, and a total of 311 members, including those designated as “scattered believers.”<sup>55</sup> The officers of the conference were: G. C. Tenney, president; Thos. Whittle, vice president; H. C. Lacey, secretary; and F. W. Paap, Tract Society business agent. The position of treasurer was apparently left open.<sup>56</sup>

On October 17, 1904, a North Queensland Mission was separated from the Queensland Conference.<sup>57</sup> The boundary line was the Tropic of Capricorn.<sup>58</sup> The headquarters were in Townsville.<sup>59</sup> As a mission organization, North Queensland came under the direct supervision of the Australasian Union Conference. The division between north and south was not long-lasting, however. The conference and the mission were reunited on the recommendation of the Australasian Union Conference and voted “with hearty approval” at the Queensland camp meeting and conference held at Toowoomba during September 17–27, 1907.<sup>60</sup>

In 1916 the northern rivers region of New South Wales was ceded to the Queensland Conference.<sup>61</sup> This arrangement lasted until 1923, when, after much discussion, the region was transferred back to the New South Wales Conference.<sup>62</sup>

At the Australasian Union Conference session held at Avondale, October 2–16, 1918, it was decided to again separate north and south Queensland. However, because the Church had commenced its work in Papua in 1908, plans were made to form a North Queensland-Papua Mission. The recommendation was:

WHEREAS, The territory of the Queensland Conference as now fixed presents almost insurmountable difficulties for aggressive work being undertaken in the northern portion by the Queensland Conference; and WHEREAS, This northern section offers favorable opportunity for developing strong work, We Recommend, That the portion of Queensland to the north of the terminus of Brisbane-Rockhampton railway, together with Papua, be formed into a mission field under the supervision of the Union Conference, to be known as the North Queensland-Papua Mission.<sup>63</sup>

A. H. White was chosen as the superintendent of the mission, and the headquarters were in Charters Towers.<sup>64</sup> However, the combined mission was short-lived. At the Australasian Union Conference session in September 1922 the union secretary, W. G. Turner, reported that “owing to the difficulty in operating Papua from Queensland, the organization known as the North Queensland-Papua Mission has been dissolved, the two fields now working as separate missions under the direction of the Australasian Union Conference.”<sup>65</sup>



The following year the North Queensland Mission and the Queensland Conference were again reunited. Members above the Tropic of Capricorn were placed on the membership roll of the conference church.<sup>66</sup>

Then once again the Queensland Conference and the North Queensland Mission were separated in 1928. At the Australasian Union Conference Council held in September 1928 the following recommendation was adopted:

WHEREAS it has been found impracticable to operate the whole of the territory within the Queensland Conference under one organisation, owing to the immense area to be covered, *Voted*, that the territory of the Queensland Conference be divided as follows: That all that portion of the State lying north of a line drawn from Yeppoon west to Kunwarara on the Marlborough line, and thence due south to the top of the range just west of Deeford, and thence in a direct line to the South Australian border, be operated as a mission field under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Australasian Union Conference; that a superintendent be appointed to take the oversight of the churches and of the general mission work within this territory, and to engage, as far as possible, in evangelical work; and that all the Queensland territory lying south of the said line be known as the Queensland Conference, to be operated by the local conference executive committee.<sup>67</sup>

No further amalgamation has taken place. The *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1950 first listed the territory of the Queensland Conference in almost identical language to that used to describe the current territory of the South Queensland Conference.<sup>68</sup> In 1955 the North Queensland Mission was organized into the North Queensland Conference.<sup>69</sup> In September 1968 the name of the Queensland Conference was changed to the South Queensland Conference.<sup>70</sup>

## Mission and Strategic Plans of the Conference

The mission statement of the South Queensland Conference is *Shaping for Mission*.<sup>71</sup>

The conference is fulfilling its mission by:

- i. Ongoing leadership initiatives to support and equip pastoral and lay members.
- ii. Initiating and mobilizing lay leadership. In partnership with the Greater Sydney Conference and the Western Australia Conference, the conference is exploring models of creating more lay ownership and involvement in mission.
- iii. Relocating the Conference Office during 2015 from 19 Eagle Terrace, Brisbane, to 400 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, and an intentional renaming of the new site as “Administration and Resourcing Centre, Seventh-day Adventist Church South Queensland” was undertaken. There are plans to develop an urban center of influence from a ground floor street access.

- iv. Planning for a conference-wide public evangelistic campaign utilizing local pastor-evangelists along with evangelists from the Institute of Public Evangelism.
- v. Aligning the ministry of each conference department under the banner of “shaping for mission”
- vi. A renewed focus on serving the community around us. This is being encouraged to take place from each local home and neighborhood of members to each church and entity engaging in connecting with and serving the local community.<sup>72</sup>

Recent successes that the conference has experienced include:

- i. The creation and implementation of a ministry development plan to grow an ever-learning, vibrant, and dynamic pastoral team. Investment in the key staff of the conference will enable greater effectiveness in all areas of ministry.
- ii. The faithfulness of conference members. Tithes and offerings have continued to remain strong despite the global financial crisis and other external factors.
- iii. The ministry impact that schools have had upon the wider community with increasing numbers of non-Seventh-day Adventist students attending and making commitments to Jesus Christ.
- iv. The undiminished faith of the literature evangelist team, who continue to make great inroads for the kingdom of God as they fulfill their ministry.
- v. The establishment and expansion of a vibrant and growing ministry in aged care. This is an increasingly complex and specialized space and the conference is engaged in developing spiritual careers to minister to each resident within all aged-care facilities. Plans are being made to construct a new cohort of independent living units in the Capricorn Adventist Retirement Village, located in Yeppoon.<sup>73</sup>

Remaining challenges for the conference are:

- i. Urban drift, which places pressure on rural churches to survive.
- ii. Urban drift, which makes mission to the cities a critical component of the strategic plan.
- iii. Retention of the post-high school young adults.
- iv. Church health. Natural church development results show weaknesses in the areas of loving relationships and small-group community life.<sup>74</sup>



## List of Presidents

George C. Tenney (1899–1900); George Teasdale (1900–1901); Willard A. Colcord (1902); Asa T. Robinson (1902–1903); Sylvester W. Nellis (1903–1907); Thomas H. Craddock (1908–1910); George Teasdale (1910–1912); Charles H. Watson (1912–1914); Edwin S. Butz (1914–1915); Harold E. Piper (1916–1918); William H. Pascoe (1919); Albert W. Kent (1920–1923); Edmund B. Rudge (1924); Alfred C. Chesson (1925–1928); William G. Turner (1929); Henry A. Hill (1929–1932); Egbert H. Guilliard (1932–1936); Frank G. Rampton (1936–1940); Egbert H. Guilliard (1941–1942); Gordon Branster (1943–1948); Robert A. Greive (1948–1954); David Sibley (1954–1958); Stuart M. Uttley (1958–1961); Keith S. Parmenter (1961–1970); Ronald A. Vince (1970–1971); Leo S. Rose (1971–1978); Ernest C. Lemke (1978–1980); Harold G. Harker (1980–1985); David E. Lawson (1985–1989); Peter J. Colquhoun (1989–1995); Chester G. Stanley (1996–1999); Kenneth Vogel (1999–2003); Neil W. Watts (2004–2011); Jorge L. Munoz (2012–2015); P. Brett Townend (2016– ).

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## NOTES

1. Colin Renfrew, secretary of the South Queensland Conference, and Dr. Irena Pule, ADRA director for the conference, have compiled much of the information contained in this article.

2. Colin Renfrew, secretary, South Queensland Conference, email message to author, April 3, 2018.
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