Wesley Mission Brisbane has always had a reputation of innovation. We provided the first aged care community in Queensland in 1936, and since then, the firsts have kept on coming. That’s why we chose “innovation” as our theme for this year’s Griffith University Photographic Exhibition.

This year represents the seventh year of our partnership with Griffith University to provide this opportunity. It’s an opportunity for students to engage in a truly meaningful way with the community and be a part of the wonderful work our staff and volunteers do each day.

This year’s exhibition is a window into daily life across Wesley Mission Brisbane – and shows just how varied that day can be. From aged care, youth services, child care and community centres, we can see glimpses of the stories that make up our great organisation.

Through their talent and self-expression, these budding photographers have captured a narrative that reflects the innovation, variety and passion of Wesley Mission Brisbane. Audiences can share the understanding and emotions of the photographer as they chart their journey through the Wesley community.

This exhibition and catalogue presents the work of photographers blessed with great artistic vision. They too have demonstrated innovation by presenting our communities in new ways and through new mediums. We wish them all the best with their careers and hope that they too, like Wesley Mission Brisbane, will strive to make a positive difference in the lives of those whose stories they tell.

Geoff Batkin
Executive Director
Wesley Mission Brisbane

It comes as no surprise that the first illustration to appear in an English newspaper was that of a member of the English Royal family. The drawing of an attempted assassination of Queen Victoria was published on May 30, 1842, only three years after the introduction of the Daguerreotype and birth of photography.

No camera had been involved - only the imagination and drawing skills of the artist. It appeared on the front page of The Illustrated London News and caused a mixed reaction from the newspaper’s readers. Amongst these, and perhaps one of the most influential and outspoken, was William Wordsworth the Poet Laureate of England. He felt the use of illustrations in newspapers would cause a decline in literacy. In his sonnet Illustrated Books and Newspapers he wrote:

Now prose and verse sunk into disrepute
Must lackey a dumb Art that best can suit
The taste of this once-intellectual Land.
A backward movement surely have we here,
From manhood, - back to childhood…
Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page!
Must eyes be all in all, the tongue and ear
Nothing? Heaven keep us from a lower stage!

Fortunately, despite Wordsworth’s anti-visual stance, photographs now provide an undisputed means of communicating stories through our many forms of media.

In the 12 months since the last Wesley Mission Brisbane (WMB) / Queensland College of Art (QCA) Griffith University photojournalism exhibition was held, the world has experienced incredible events. Queensland's floods, the Egyptian revolution, the Japanese quake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, 226 tornadoes in 24 hours bringing death and destruction in southern USA, Rio de Janeiro's floods and mudslides, Osama bin Laden killed, Libyan civil war and death of Muammar Gaddafi and Europe sitting on the edge of a major financial crisis. It is therefore not unusual to expect that the public is looking for soft news to brighten their day such as the British Royal Wedding, which attracted 750 million viewers worldwide and stole the front page of 87% of the world’s daily newspapers.

We watch moving pictures but remember frozen moments and this is why photojournalism education in the Bachelor of Photography at the Queensland College of Art is taken seriously. We also understand that the public gaze is drawn to big stories and that so many important stories are left untold. Wesley Mission Brisbane, as an educational partner to the QCA, has enabled our students to gain access to stories that need to be told. Projects that cover all aspects of WMB’s community engagement such as people with disabilities, elderly living, homeless, children in need, and people in crisis have been photographed by young professionals who are intent on highlighting the significance of these often forgotten and certainly media ignored stories.

I look forward to working with Wesley Mission Brisbane again next year in the hope that we can continue to provide visual coverage of the lives of the ordinary people in their care; all of whom are as important as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Earle Bridger
Senior Lecturer Photojournalism
QCA Deputy Director (Development)
Dylan *Evans*

One of the most memorable times in my life was getting to know a 100 year old man by the name of Ralph Ellis Bramley. Accomplishments will show a man’s skills, but what really impressed me was the kind nature and generous spirit that shone onto anyone who met him. Ellis, as he likes to be called, lives by himself in one of the self-contained units at Wesley Mission Chermside. People gather possessions and keep them to remember what they have done. My body of work portrays items that represent the accomplishments of Ellis over the last century to give the audience an idea of what a fulfilled life looks like - a timeline of a centenarian.
Ralph Ellis Bramley
Born 06/06/1911

1925

1938

1940

1941 - 1943
At first glance, MailpaQ is a hive of activity and chaos; noisy and disorienting, people seem to be in all places at once. Upon further investigation however, this chaos fades away to reveal a strong sense of teamwork and togetherness. The personalities here work in systematic harmony, creating a production line of cohesiveness. The strength of the team lies in its capacity to ensure all members are treated equally, somehow managing to get the most out of everyone, relying specifically on each person’s abilities. Although the MailpaQ team consists of those with some form of disability, I was struck by their capability, strong work ethics and genuine positive attitudes towards life. I came to MailpaQ expecting to document those with a disability, and found that disability definitely does not mean inability.
Megan Keene

My time at John Wesley Gardens was spent with the Diversional Therapy team. I expected a small program, a few high teas here and there. I found a whole fleet of hard working volunteers dedicated to the residents of the facility.

There is a broad range of residents at John Wesley Gardens, each individual has their own wants and needs, and every effort seems to be made to treat everyone as such.

In my short time there, I went on bus trips, played cards and sung along to songs well before my time. There was even a Spring Fete to raise money for the residents.

The main aim of my project was to treat the residents with the same respect shown by the staff. Coming into this as an outsider, it is a community I am proud to have been a part of, if only for a short time.
Sarah Osborn

You never know where life is going to take you. Through my time at Sinnamon Village I have learnt the importance of friendships and the memories we make in our lives. Old age can be an incredibly lonely time, especially when you suddenly find yourself alone and unable to do the everyday chores you used to.

At Sinnamon Village I found an amazing network of friendship and support. I met some wonderful people who shared with me their life stories for which I am very grateful. The incredible kindness of the residents I met and their willingness to help me with whatever I needed made this experience invaluable.
When I arrived at Parkview, I had to check with the reception whether I was in the right place. Parkview is no ‘nursing home’, it’s an ‘Innovated nursing home’ a ‘5 Star Nursing Hotel’ with modern designs that impress the eyes of the residents but more so the families.

This warm modern space is soothing and calm for the residents and their families, knowing that their loved ones are taken care of with a quality of life that is unique from any other age care facility I have seen. Tuesdays are Pamper Days at Parkview and it never ceases to amaze me how much a pamper in the spa could reinvigorate a person’s life, not only did I witness this after the spa but for days after. When I mentioned the word spa to the residents, a big smile magically lights up their face from ear to ear.

I also visited a family of a Family Day Care Provider in Geebung, and as I have used this service for my children before they started school, so I knew this environment was going to be wonderful.

The home environment assisted the children to experience and develop a great sense of belonging, being and becoming, which made my job easy and most enjoyable to capture the essence of being a child. The children and I were oblivious to each other, they went along with their busy day to learn, explore, play, imagine, communicate and connect and I went along to observe and capture some magical experiences.
Kylie Hay

The experience I had shooting for Wesley Mission Brisbane was one that I will remember forever. I walked in not knowing what to expect and what I got went above and beyond. The warm open hearts of the Youngcare residents, willing to share their stories and welcome me into their homes was special. I've never walked into a room full and received so many smiles until I visited Youngcare and to feel at home in another’s is rare.

I was fortunate to gain two experiences with Wesley Mission; the second was Wheller on the Park. Outside on the patio all the ladies with their cups of tea and gents with their Sundays bests on started making their way down for their weekly bout of Tuesday trivia, so many smiles and joy on the faces as the rounds went by and the hands waving up in the air for those who got 10/10, it was a joyful sight.

I even learnt a thing or two.
Kyle Austin

For the past two months I have been with Wesley Mission Brisbane, specializing in a small community centre at Balmoral.

Balmoral Uniting Community Centre is what it is called. I have had the privilege of photographing both the attendees and carers there, whilst they partake in activities such as exercise, singing and dancing and having a great time together.

This was a great experience for me as it allowed for me to learn more about what Wesley had to offer to this particular community. The volunteers were second to none as they were there to always help and establish a great community with such wonderful people.
Kirsten Sorensen

My whole experience whilst working with Wesley Mission was one of learning, as I discovered the diversity of what such an organisation does to help within the community. During my 14 weeks with Wesley Mission I visited the Sinnamon Village Hydrotherapy centre and followed Tina, a nurse who works in community care. When first hearing about Wesley Mission I had no idea about the amount of work that they do to help people of all ages within all sectors of the community. I have met a lot of interesting and wonderful people, including two wonderful gentlemen Mr Cook and Mr Guth who both allowed me to enter their homes and document them on a weekly basis. I loved hearing their stories and learning about their own personal achievements. Working with Wesley Mission was a great opportunity, which I am very thankful to have had.
Over several visits I photographed Hadden Place, Wesley Mission’s dementia respite centre located in Sinnamon Park.

I have always had a fondness for elderly people; I love listening to stories and being able to spend time with people who have done life for a while.

Though many of the people that come to Hadden Place can’t remember parts of their stories, occasionally something will trigger a memory. Whether through the pictures in a photographic book, singing along to an old tune or doing the crossword, Hadden Place looks at ways to engage the mind, keep the brain active and bring recollection.

During my visits I was struck by the varying degrees of dementia and initially was unsure how to approach the experience of visually documenting Hadden Place. However, I was also overwhelmed by the level of care displayed by the workers and volunteers and amongst the elderly people themselves. It is this second point that I chose to focus on and try to convey through my imagery. I wanted to illustrate the amount of nurturing evident in these relationships and to show the importance of touch.
Walking into Youngcare for the first time, I was struck by how beautifully light and colourful it was inside, with immense windows looking out onto lush landscaped gardens. It was here that I met Linda, who kindly let me into her life and photograph her over a period of 5 weeks. Throughout our conversations, I discovered how much Youngcare meant to Linda by giving her a strong sense of independence and privacy through the provision of her own apartment and garden, (even having the space for relatives to stay), whilst still providing a high level of care that she needed in order to improve her physical well-being. Through the assistance of carers and various activities and programmes such as going to the movies, going sailing, having hydrotherapy and acupuncture, Linda felt part of a community and was often so busy she could not answer my calls! Many of these activities would not have been available had Linda moved into an aged care facility.

This community feeling resonates throughout Youngcare, starting with the colourful artwork on the wall made by many of the residents’ relatives and culminating in a resident’s meeting, where residents have the authority to make decisions over how Youngcare is managed on a day to day basis. I was very much inspired by Linda’s story, her determination in being able to enjoy activities that many of us take for granted, all whilst obtaining the care that she needs. I have no doubt that Youngcare’s innovative programme plays a major part in this.

I felt very privileged in being let into Linda’s life so intimately and I hope that her story illustrates the need for many more Youngcare facilities.
Erin Tyler
Youngcare Resident Lyn Colquhoun.
Lyn is a fully qualified nurse, journalist, and mother. However, she suffers from a rare cell disease, which not only affects her mobility but also drastically reduces her energy levels, leaving her requiring twenty-four hour assistance.

Since Lyn was diagnosed with the disease she has lived in and out of nursing home care that can seem melancholy and institutional, and not a place where one can feel at home. A few years ago Lyn moved into Wesley Mission Brisbane’s Youngcare Apartments which offer the care that Lyn requires, and also the chance to make her place of residence a home.
Consciously, I didn’t go in with any expectations, sub-consciously I did. When I was told I’d be shooting some cheerleaders, I expected the stereotype. However, these girls were far from it, mainly because their age ranged from 8-18. They were a little shy at first, but once they got used to who I was, they couldn’t stop posing for the camera. They were reliable and easy to contact, easy to talk to and hang out with and more than comfortable helping me with every aspect of photographic work. The energy and commitment they exude with their performances was unreal. It’s something they are so passionate about which made it such a fun shoot each and every time.
When first walking into the Balmoral Uniting Community Centre I had no idea what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised to walk into a room filled with lovingly decorated cakes, and adorned with cups, saucers and care. Once a month this particular group of women meet to talk about the past, present and future and on this morning it was high tea. Uniting Community Centre is a very fitting name for this establishment. The women who volunteer to create the high tea also enjoyed it with their peers. A huge amount of effort goes into the morning tea and the appreciation the women have for it and the care they feel towards each other is clear. Wesley Mission gives the women the opportunity to hold such a morning tea that they otherwise might not have.
St Marks Aged Care Nursing House in Wesley Mission looks like my second home! I loved taking photos of these lovely people who are living and working there. During this time I made so many great friends, they told me so many stories about themselves, some happy, some sad, but all of them inspiring. I hope my photos can now tell their stories to you.
In a community specifically built for the later years in life, Wheller on the Park is a great example of how the elderly should be able to spend their retired years. An emphasis is placed on individuals keeping their independence and leading whole and fulfilling lives. Residents are encouraged to socialise, involve themselves in sports and activities, show the talents they have picked up over the years in the arts and gather Friday afternoons for a drink. Spending time around the people that now call this place home gave me an insight into what it meant to grow old. You are still full of passions, mischief, adventure, desires for friendships, independence and plenty of room for growth. With the aging population of Australia growing, environments created for the elderly so they may live comfortably and purposefully for the rest of their lives is of importance to all of society.
This story begins with an empty blackboard and tells of a day I documented an unfolding artwork, beginning in artists’ minds, through to a finished product on a café wall. I wandered down Boundary Street in West End in search of Vinyl, a bar and restaurant hidden at one end of the street. A group of people, all of varying ages were gathered out the front. Chatter amongst them echoed out to the sidewalk. Chalk, cloth and water bottles, were tucked in a box, resting on the closed café door and I knew I was at the right venue. I introduced myself and my presence was instantly welcomed with curious and friendly faces.

The ‘Chalk Mural’ was jointly organized by Art from The Margins coordinator, Tony Anderton with the Brisbane Festival as part of the events’ opening display. After speaking with the artists, I learned this was the group’s first experience creating live art. Utilizing the large blackboards permanently displayed around the café walls, the project’s facilitator and chalk artist, Susie Lockhart discussed with each member their individual concept and considered approach.

They were designated space on the board, some of the artists using ladders for height. Susie encouraged the artist to feel at ease and spoke individually with each member. The final product shows a variety of talents from intricate detail through to colour blending. The chalk mural is an innovative approach from conventional artwork as it allows artists to collaborate and share a common goal yet continue to develop their ideas freely within their own space. All in one day.
Elin Sundstrom

Working with Wesley Mission has been a lovely experience and a great memory for life. Working within this community made me realize how well people that are in need are being looked after and how much love and passion there is between those walls and a beautiful atmosphere.

When I arrived to the community centre I was welcomed with open arms and I felt relaxed and comfortable straight away. Thanks to Graham the volunteer I was following I got the possibility to finish my folio from Wesley Mission. I think it is lovely to see how many kind hearted people that want to do something good for someone without getting paid and are just doing it because they love doing it.

I also got to meet some lovely characters that have had a long life of history and stories which kind of makes you quite emotional but at the same time happy to see that they can relax in peace at this place and enjoy the people that surround them.
It’s fair to say that I wasn’t sure how I’d go documenting an aged care home for Wesley Mission Brisbane. I’ve never really known how to act around elderly people, which I’ve put down to the fact that I grew up without grandparents. But my time at the Bethesda Caring Centre certainly changed all that!

Located alongside the Brisbane River in Corinda, the heritage facility (Bethesda celebrated its 50th anniversary as an aged care home in October this year) provides specialist high care in an innovative environment that fosters each individual’s personality and their needs in the later stages of life.

The residents were a remarkable mix of characters whose company I enjoyed immensely during daily activities such as choir practice. However it was my one-on-one time with them that I cherished the most. I’d never before had such interesting, educational and heartfelt conversations.

I recognised the importance of representing a cross-section of residents in my work since they were all so unique and deserving of their time in front of the camera. As a result, a typology of 22 portraits was formed, eight of which are featured here.