



October 2015

BIOGRAPHY

Rev. Bill Crews

Rev. William David Crews was born in England in 1944 and educated in Australia. He studied Electrical Engineering at the University of NSW under a scholarship provided by A.W.A. and then until 1971 worked with A.W.A in microelectronic research studying the properties of silicon. During this time he built the first machine to grow ultra pure single crystal silicon in Australia.

In late 1969 he first visited the Wayside Chapel in Sydney's red-light district of Kings Cross and ultimately became involved in voluntary programmes; visiting the elderly, sick and shut-ins of the Woolloomooloo-Kings Cross area.

By 1971 he had decided to quit engineering and work full time at the Wayside Chapel. Bill was a member of the team that created the first 24-hour Crisis Centre in Australia. By 1972 he was Director of the Crisis Centre and directed all the social work programmes of the Wayside Chapel until 1983. During that time he established the first programme in Australia to reunite adoptees and birth parents (Reunion Register), and the first programme to assist parents who were at risk of abusing their children (Child Abuse Prevention Service). He also established the first modern youth refuge in Australia.

In 1973 he was made a member of the New South Wales Drug and Alcohol Authority and was intimately involved in establishing drug rehabilitation, education and prevention programmes throughout New South Wales.

In 1978 he and the Rev. Ted Noffs created the first Life Education Centre. Life Education Centres are now all over Australia, Hong Kong, Thailand, New Zealand, England and America.

In 1983 he left the Wayside Chapel to study Theology at the Uniting Church's United Theological College and graduated in 1986. In that same year he was ordained as minister of the Ashfield Uniting Church in Sydney's inner-west. At Ashfield he created **The Exodus Foundation** to assist homeless and abandoned youth, and other people in need.

Today **The Exodus Foundation** is one of Sydney's largest frontline charities. It runs the Loaves & Fishes Free Restaurant, serving 1,000 meals to the needy every day. The Foundation also operates Tutorial Centres which teach literacy skills to children who have fallen through the cracks in the mainstream education system. It runs a free dental and medical clinic, provides help and support services such as social workers, chaplaincy, counselling, and food parcel assistance.

Rev. Crews has been awarded *The Rotary Foundation International Award 'Paul Harris Fellow'*. He has been voted Father of the Year and Humanitarian of the Year (1992). In February 1998 Rev. Crews was included in the *National Trust's 100 National Living Treasures*. In 1999 Rev. Crews was awarded an **Order of Australia (AM)** for his services to the disadvantaged and his work with homeless youth.

As part of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Bill ran a leg of the Olympic Torch Relay and the Paralympic Torch Relay. He also distributed hundreds of donated tickets to those who would otherwise not have had the financial means to partake in the Olympic experience.

Rev. Bill Crews's achievements demonstrate his capacity to lead and positively influence the community in a myriad of tangible ways.

In 2001 Bill was named Ashfield Citizen of the Year for his contribution to the local community. He received the *William R. Tresise Fellowship Award* from the Australian Lions Foundation in June 2001 – the highest honour the Foundation bestows for humanitarian services. In 2001 Rev. Crews also received an *Alumni Award* from the University of New South Wales.

Bill actively supports multi-faith dialogue and understanding between cultures. He meets regularly with the Dalai Lama and supports the *Free Tibet* movement in Australia. Rev. Crews appeared as a guest judge alongside his Holiness Dalai Lama on Network Ten's *Masterchef* programme in 2010.

Rev. Crews is a Patron of Australians For Just Refugee Programmes, and Chairman of Fair Go Australia – an anti-racism project sponsored by the NSW Government through the Department of Community Relations Commission.

Since August 2002 Rev. Crews has broadcast his *Sunday Night Crews* radio programme on Sydney station 2GB-873AM. The programme is the highest rating Sunday night radio show in the nation, with an audience share of 17.8% and 102,000 listeners.

In 2006 Bill was awarded the *Ernst & Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award* in recognition of his world-class leadership and innovation in social programmes.

In 2007 Rev. Crews was named as one of Australia's 100 most influential people by the prestigious *Bulletin & Newsweek* magazine.

In 2010 The Bill Crews Charitable Trust was established to encourage and develop new and innovative projects aimed at alleviating poverty, mostly in developing regions. The Trust works in close partnership with 'social entrepreneurs' making positive change through hands-on work supporting local people.

Rev. Crews campaigns tirelessly for poker machine reform, his passion for the issue being driven by the work he has done with gambling addicts whose lives have been shattered by the effects of gambling. In 2011 he was appointed chair of the NSW division of the Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce.

In 2012 Rev. Crews founded *The Big Picture Film Festival* which first screened in February 2013 at Event Cinemas in the heart of Sydney. The festival was extremely successful and plans for the 2014 festival are already well underway.

In September 2015 Rev. Crews was announced as the recipient of the 2015 NSW Human Rights Award. The NSW Human Rights Award pays tribute to those who support the disadvantaged and marginalized and endeavour to make NSW a better community.

Bill Crews lives in Sydney and has four children.