



# History in the palm of your hand



Imagine 50,000+ pages of newsprint filled with interesting information about people, churches, places and events, along with photographs and inspirational articles, produced over a period of nearly 80 years and covering developments across the whole of Australia and beyond! That is the size and nature of the newspaper which reported on Baptist life in our country from 1913 to 1991, informing and inspiring people and churches.

How much space would it take up on your shelves? How long would it take to find a piece of information that you needed? How would you share this collection with people wanting to access it in different parts of the country? How could you preserve it so it didn't deteriorate?

Published weekly for many years, *The Australian Baptist* (AB) was packed with valuable data about our churches, evangelism, missionaries, people's lives and all the rest. However, the only set available in Queensland covers about one third only of the period, and there are only three or four complete sets elsewhere, resulting in much of the information locked up and hidden away.

That was the case up to now—but no longer! Imagine now that all this information could fit in the palm of your hand, can be searched in a few minutes, and shared with whoever needs it electronically or as a print-out?



The AB is being digitised, thanks to the cooperation of Baptist Historical Societies and Archives, Baptist Unions and some generous individuals from all states. The process is well underway, with the first round of material up to 1960 already on hand. It is due to be completed soon and will be available in the Baptist Archives Queensland and Malyon College library. Although there is a large amount of material, it will fit easily on a small external hard drive or a few memory sticks, and information can be found quickly.

The project has been underway for the last year or so with scanning taking place mainly in Adelaide, and much of the process being finalised in Brisbane. It is expected to be launched at the next gathering of Australian Baptist Archivists in Melbourne in November this year. It will be particularly valuable for Queensland because our local paper, *The qb* (The Queensland Baptist), was not published for the first decade of the AB, and it is missing for a further 20 years later on. With interest in the First World War now to the fore, it is extremely helpful to have the AB with its coverage of Queensland news available for that period.

This is just one of a series of digitisation projects making valuable data readily available. Most of *The qb* has already been digitised, along with many of the Baptist Union of Queensland Year and Report books. This availability has



revolutionised searching for information about families, churches, ministers and church activities.

Some local church material in digital form is already held by our Archives. This includes printed histories as well as projects that have been published as books over the last few years. The biggest scanned collection is one church's entire documentation dating back to the late 1800s. Now another project is underway—the City Tabernacle Baptist Church is digitising its 'Year Books', which date from 1891. They consist of booklets of 50 pages or more, with detailed reports of the church's activities and names of many people—all of which is an invaluable resource about the state's first church.

Digital records are a now vital part of the any church's documentation and require careful handling. The overall aims and principles are the same as for paper records, but the practical aspects are much more complex. The Baptist Archives Queensland has step by step Guide Sheets available to help churches and their leaders in managing their digital archives. These are available at [www.qb.com.au](http://www.qb.com.au) or by request.

**Baptist Church Archives**  
[archives@qb.com.au](mailto:archives@qb.com.au),  
 Ph 07 3878 3178, 07 3354 5642  
 or 07 3256 8897  
**The Baptist Archives**  
 PO Box 6166, Mitchelton Q 5053