

12 March, 2019

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**REV DR. JOHN SMITH – ON THE SIDE OF ANGELS NOW**

Concern Australia Board, Staff and Volunteers were deeply saddened to hear of the recent passing of Rev Dr John Smith, the founder of Concern Australia (previously Care & Communication Concern), the founding President of the God’s Squad Christian Motorcycle Club, Melbourne, Truth & Liberation Concern and St Martin’s Community Churches.

Dr John Smith is an author of many books including his memoir “On the Side of Angels,” a motivational speaker, a social commentator, cultural anthropologist, advocate, pioneer, innovator and biker.

From the 1970s onwards, John Smith has delivered thousands of inspirational talks. He spoke regularly on radio and in schools, churches and communities across Australia, reaching out to people to ask difficult questions about the meaning of life and how to live a meaningful life.

Ahead of his times, John delivered counter-cultural messages, to get his point across, challenging people to be authentic, compassionate and to live God’s love through caring for those less fortunate. The God’s Squad Christian Motorcycle Club began as an outlaw biker fraternity delivering ministry to those who must vulnerable living on the fringes of society.

John attracted international attention from U2’s front man Bono who praised his book by saying: “John Smith’s message is for people who want to do more than just listen.” Bono also went on to say, “I was influenced by an Australian preacher I know called John Smith, who is a very eloquent speaker with a brilliant mind.”

John’s legacy will live on through the work of Concern Australia, working with young people and children experiencing disadvantage, at risk and vulnerable, including programs he started: Values for Life that has been instilling positive values and teaching resilience in schools since the late 1960s; and Hand Brake Turn delivering hands on automotive training since 1994.

Our CEO, Michelle Crawford said, “We are so pleased that John, “Bullfrog,” “Smithy,” had the opportunity to spend time with our staff recently. His presence, and his words of wisdom, continue to inspire our staff knowing that they are carrying his legacy forward. We continue to work with some of the most difficult and challenging young people with trauma based behaviours and our staff continue to offer hope for young people and children and to walk alongside them, no matter how hard it is, to enable them to step towards positive outcomes.”

Our Chair, David Eldridge spoke about John Smith, “With the passing of John Smith we have a lost a giant of the Australian Christian community. Throughout his life, John’s prophetic voice challenged injustice and his boundless energy saw him establish the God’s Squad Christian Motorcycle Club and Concern Australia as vehicles for transforming lives of marginalised Australians. At Concern Australia we celebrate the life of our Founder and are so thankful that his wife Glena and the Smith family shared John with us. You are in our prayers.”

John Smith’s funeral service will be held on Saturday 23 March at 2pm at the Wave Baptist Church, corner of Wellington Road and Lake Avenue, Ocean Grove. Everyone is welcome to attend.

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