

Luis Palau Reaches 30,000 Young People at Australian Festival

More than 30 years after his first campaign in Newcastle, evangelist Luis Palau returned to help more than 100 local churches reach new generations with the love and Good News of Jesus.

An estimated 30,000 people flocked to Newcastle's Foreshore Park Nov. 17-18 for CityFest—two days of live music, kid-friendly shows and activities, and the gospel message presented nightly by Palau. "I have seldom felt the presence of God in a crowd like I felt tonight," he said after speaking on Saturday.

CityFest included performances by *Australian Idol* winner Stan Walker, New Zealand rockers Evermore, and praise powerhouses Darlene Zschech and Hillsong. Stunt demonstrations and personal testimonies by extreme sports athletes highlighted the festival's youthful bent.

Palau's son and co-evangelist, Andrew Palau, also shared the stage. By the end of the weekend, several hundred people had made the decision to follow Jesus Christ according to response cards.

Several individuals who came to faith during one of Palau's previous events in Newcastle—then called "crusades"—helped cast the vision for today's model. Jenny Allen, dean of students at the University of Newcastle and chair of counselor training for CityFest, said her role had everything to do with the decision she made at a crusade in 1979.

"My hope and dream for this festival is that in 33 years, someone could be sitting here filming somebody else who

remembers the 17th of November the same way we remember '79," Allen said in a video interview. "That they sit here because of the moment in time when they were confronted with the reality of Jesus."

Andrew Cole, pastor at New Vine Baptist Church, oversaw the festival's Kids Zone. Cole accepted Christ as a teenager during a Palau crusade in 1982. "I was a messy, 18 year-old, beer-swilling, rugby-playing young person. When I heard Luis speak, that got my attention," he said. "It's been such a wonderful thing for me to contribute into this festival, knowing that 30 years ago a whole bunch of people gave me the opportunity to hear."

For months leading up to CityFest, more than 1,000 volunteers from churches across the Hunter Region of Australia performed 60 community service projects through an initiative called CityServe. "When the church is serving, it's shining," Festival Coordinator Rick Prosser said of the outreach.

"Our hope is that CityServe becomes a culture for the body of Christ to serve our community. It really established tremendous bridges in the community—into the schools, into the business sector, into the civic arena ... we were tremendously embraced by the city."

The two-day festival was the culmination of an entire season of ministry, including 16 evangelistic events for students, military personnel, civic leaders and business professionals. The campaign also included a unique time of training and mentorship for more than 50 Australian evangelists.

"This campaign built on a foundation laid 30 years ago and set the tone for the future. Whatever God's doing in Newcastle, CityFest was not the end but the beginning," Festival Director Colin James said.

The Palau team is currently working with local churches to follow up with each new believer and connect them with a

church in their area.