

Innocents Relief

President's Report July 2022

It is with great pleasure that I present this year's President's report. Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic Innocents Relief has continued its work supporting the education of impoverished children. Most of the schools have now reopened but in many countries large scale unemployment still exists, and the children and their families are still struggling. As I mentioned last year, although our raison d'être is to break the cycle of poverty by supporting the education of impoverished children, our Constitution does allow us to support any child in 'distress'. In this context in 2020 - 2021 we raised over \$100,000 allowing us to provide an additional \$3,000 to each Centre with 4 of the most needy receiving an extra \$6,000. I am now pleased to report that this year we were able to allocate a further \$1,000 Covid-relief to each of our Centres which has allowed them to continue to support the children, their families and communities suffering as a result of the pandemic.

With the Omicron variant of Covid-19 spreading through the community, our volunteers have continued to work from home although Susan and Anne have been going into the office every week to ensure our database and receipting are kept up to date. I would like to make special mention of the fact that Susan will be stepping down from the committee this year after many years as assistant secretary and vice-president for the last twelve months. On behalf of all of Innocents Relief I would sincerely like to thank her for her dedication and commitment to Innocents Relief. Over the past five years that I have been president I have truly valued Susan's advice and support. She will be greatly missed by all.

I would also like to thank all of our volunteers; Robyn our secretary, Clare and Mary our Centre Managers, Anne our assistant secretary, Christine our treasurer as well as Michael Halliday, Glenys, and Michael White who are committee members. Michael White has also agreed to act as our external liaison officer and I would like to record my thanks to him for doing this. Both Christine and Michael Halliday will be stepping down from the committee this year and I would like to extend my thanks to them for their valuable contribution to the committee over the past two years.

At the AGM last year, the resolution to become incorporated was passed unanimously. As a result, Innocents Relief Ltd. was registered earlier this year with the current committee members becoming Directors of the company. I would like to thank Glenys for all the work she put into making this a reality. We are now going through the process of IR Ltd. being recognised as a charity by the ACNC and I would like to thank Glenys and especially Robyn who have been taking the running on this and who have already put in an enormous amount of work. The ACNC now require a huge amount of detail which is taking some time to put together, but nevertheless we are getting there. As we move to IR Ltd. a review of donation

recommendations will be a priority and, in this context, eliminating the membership fee and increasing the recommended donation amount will be considered. We will also need to consider alternative methods of funding our admin costs while keeping tax deductibility for the entire donation. As a result, we are not recommending any changes to the membership and sponsorship fees at this AGM hence you will note that this is not on the agenda as it has been in previous years.

The 'Special Project' programme was established a few years ago, in recognition of the trend for 'one-off' donations and the decline in membership and hence sponsorships. Over the past twelve months the 'Special Project' programme has expanded such that we completed 25 projects at a cost of \$182,799 and currently have 12 ongoing projects costing \$176,800. I'm sure the Centre Managers will tell you more about these projects in their reports. The completed projects range from \$1,500 for the purchase of raincoats and shoes for IND52 to \$55,000 for the construction of new classrooms and a toilet block for TLE02. The ongoing projects include a 'one-off' donation of \$120,000 from St Paschal's Monastery Aitape for school fees, meals, services, maintenance, transport etc. for PNG02.

This year has also seen the opening of two new Centres in collaboration with other charities with similar objectives. In collaboration with the Friends of Himalayan Children (a charity based in Cairns) we are now supporting the education of children in Batase a small village in Nepal NEP01. Due to the amazing generosity of our members and supporters we have been able to provide a sustainable water supply to the school and have been able to attract a substantial donation from The Ubuntu Foundation for further infrastructure development.

Our second new Centre is Pre-eskolar Komunitade (Community Preschool) - Vatuboro Loes, Timor Leste (TLE03). Vatuboro Loes is located on the coastline 22km east of the Maubara township and 38km east of Liquica, the nearest major town. There is limited public transport and few people own motor vehicles. There are no other preschools nearby to Vatuboro Loes, which is why it was established by the head of the village and the Director of Education. It is increasingly being recognised that Early Childhood Education is critically important in children's educational development, hence the decision to create this new Centre in collaboration with the Queensland Commandery of the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem (OLJ). We have already been able to provide funds for the purchase of computers and due to the extreme generosity of one of our supporters we will now be building two new classrooms.

On behalf of all the children and families who will benefit from these projects, I would like to thank sincerely the amazing members and supporters who have made these projects possible. There is no doubt that we live in a troubled world and it is extremely heart-warming to see such wonderful people continuing to support the education of children so as to break the cycle of poverty.

Our membership has continued to decline over the past twelve months, but our total income, although slightly less than last year, has, however, remained around \$500,000 at \$502,744. Our operating costs were roughly the same as last year at \$7,597 such that our overheads were 1.5% of total income this year. The treasurer will cover this more fully in her report. Our ability to have such low running costs is not only due to the generosity of the office volunteers but is also made possible by the generosity of Fr. Pat Richards, the Parish Priest at St Lucia. And while we have been unable to fully use the space under the church this past year, he continues to support our work both directly and indirectly. Without his support we would not be able to function as we do, and again, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Fr. Richards.

Finally, thank you to all the office volunteers and committee members and especially to all donors, both members and supporters, your contributions have made a huge difference to the lives of many children over many, many years.

Gregory J Seymour AM

President