

Action Aid Australia Ltd

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In Memory of Dr. Brian Ryan (1941-2006)

Roger Hughes

Those at the Action Aid AGM were disturbed by the news that our former chairman, Brian Ryan, was under operation to stem the effects of an aneurism. Unfortunately, Brian did not survive and with his passing Action Aid lost a great friend.

I first met Brian some twenty five years ago when, while he was working for CSIRO Cloud Physics, he temporarily transferred from Sydney to Melbourne. Soon afterwards we found ourselves working together at the newly established CSIRO Atmospheric Research. He was a very thorough scientist, an outstanding manager and a very caring person. I have no doubt that Brian would like to be associated with his scientific contributions, but for Action Aid it was the latter two qualities that were important. Scientists (and for that matter academics in general) are not easy to organise with their often obsessive interests. Brian was a good listener. He listened. He negotiated and he delegated with empathy. He ran a very happy group.

Thus it was not surprising that in the late 90's after he joined the board of Action Aid and later became chairman that he should bring these qualities to our organisation. Under his chairmanship Action Aid had an extremely successful period. It was a period of cooperation and harmony. Action Aid now, even with its lower AusAID status, is stronger than it has been for many years. Brian had a large part in achieving this happy state. He cared deeply about the justice of Action Aid's work.

Brian was transferred to Perth, his childhood town, a little over a year ago. At that time he handed over the chairmanship to Ian Pickering but remained an honorary adviser. He was to retire from CSIRO at the end of this year and had been looking forward to an active retirement. Our sympathies go out to Robyn, his wife, and his grown family. Brian is being missed by many.

Brian Ryan

Ian Pickering

1997 Brian joined the Board of Directors of Action Aid Australia.
1999-2000 Deputy Chairman/Acting Chairman.
2000-2005 Chairman

Brian's service to some of the most underprivileged people of the world is much appreciated, and his leadership of AAA highly valued. Brian brought professional objectivity to decision making, objectivity which was balanced with compassion, and the consideration of others. During his leadership, Brian brought great solidarity to our organisation, the results of which are still being seen in our boom time of financial success. Brian Ryan will long be remembered as one of the great contributors to the work of Action Aid Australia.

I am very pleased to report that Action Aid Australia has experienced a significant increase in income during the past year, and this of course will be reflected in our support for communities in need overseas.

Our overall growth in income for the year was 22%, even after the loss of AusAID funds. This wonderful result was achieved due to a 44% increase in funding from members fees, donations and fund-raising.

In-Australia expenditure represented 15% of total expenditure for the year, and 6% of this was for self-funded visits to project areas by authorized representatives of Action Aid Australia.

Members may note that expenditure on projects and progress is slightly reduced compared to the previous year. Our Board's conservative approach to this expenditure is a result of our desire to upgrade core project activities which are operated on an annual basis. We have been reluctant to expend funds outside of normal project activity times, but an increase is expected during the coming year.

Part of our increase in finances has been due to fund-raising activities during the year. Andrea and Geoff Pickering held a very successful World Food dinner last October, and Glenys and Roger Hughes hosted a Theatre Dinner night in May. Roger Griffiths was our co-ordinator of "Love Letters".

As usual Joy Handley and her band of friends in Bright contributed to fund raising by holding a breakfast and a World Food Day Luncheon. We thank Anne Marie Maltby for her work with Joy for the ABWU and Jess Fliegner for her work on the WEB page which is broadening our support base.

Special thanks to Lyn and Andrea for the bulk of the day to day running of our office. Lyn and Andrea contribute countless hours to make AAA run smoothly, and their efforts enable us to continue as a totally voluntary operated organisation.

Board members all continue to play a big role in determining the policy and direction of AAA. Special thanks go to Executive members, Secretary Chris Pittendrigh, Treasurer Andrea Pickering, and Deputy Chairman Roger Hughes. Collectively our Board brings together a great deal of experience, practical skill, and professional expertise to the benefit of our organisation and the communities that we serve.

Our project activities in India and Bangladesh continue to be run by our highly regarded, highly committed and highly professional partners in SEDS and Symbiosis. I do not wish to re-state information on project activities which has been included in detail in our newsletters during the year, except to comment on the enormous development work being done through educational programs of self-empowerment for participating communities, with a special emphasis on the role of women, and increased literacy skills for children.

In conclusion, I wish to dedicate this 2005/06 report to our members and other supporters who have taken us forward in service to the needs of disadvantaged people in India and Bangladesh. The loss of AusAID Accreditation nearly two years ago was a great blow to our team of volunteers. However, with your growing support, we can now go forward with greater confidence and commitment.

Finally, I wish Dr. Anne Marie Maltby every success during her term of leadership of Action Aid Australia. I'm sure Anne Marie will have the support of our hard-working team of volunteers, and of our members.

Ian Pickering
Chairman 2005/06

Board of Directors for 2006-07

Executive

Honorary Chairperson – Dr. Anne Marie Maltby
Hon. Dep.Chairman – Dr. Roger Hughes
Hon. Treasurer – Andrea Pickering
Hon. Secretary – Rev. Chris Pittendrigh

Honorary Directors

Roger Griffiths
Lyn Pickering
Glenys Hughes
Ian Pickering
Jess Fliegner

Honorary Advisors for 2006/07

Dr. Cecily Neil
Dr. Tom Beer
Rev. Morris Lee
Mrs. Joy Handley

Country Directors

Bangladesh – Roger Hughes
India – Ian Pickering

Child Sponsorship

India – ABWU – Anne Marie Maltby/Joy Handley
India – SEDS – Lyn Pickering

Newsletter Editor– Jess Fliegner

Bangladesh Projects Updates

Symbiosis

Roger Hughes and Morris Lee

The Technical Training Programme (TTIS) that Action Aid runs through Symbiosis has had a good year, with students undergoing training throughout villages in Bangladesh. Over the past year 363 students have graduated with a range of skills in the following areas:

- 319 graduates trained in sewing
- 20 graduates trained in embroidery
- 17 graduates trained in garment making (a programme at a higher technical level than the above sewing course)
- 7 graduates in hairdressing and beauty

To support the expanded activities and students this year Symbiosis has started two new hairdressing salons. This year, all of the graduates have been women. Although the courses are not restricted to women, women are given preference in the opportunity for training.

As well as providing technical skills training, there has also been growth in the provision of equipment, community training in health and human rights and the formation of numerous community groups in the following areas:

- 10 new sewing machines purchased by the graduates (with some financial support)
- 552 lessons given in primary health care
- 551 lessons in human rights awareness
- 2 new cooperatives
- 5 new savings groups
- 2 new marketing outlets
- monthly growth monitoring of 99 children under 5 years of age

The new financial year has seen these programmes continue and new activities including functional education classes for both men and women (with four women's education classes being established for every men's class), an emphasis on primary school education, and classes on the environmental awareness and an associated planting of 500 trees.

Jumana River

Roger Hughes

Few readers will know of a second project that Action Aid has in Bangladesh –the Jumana River Project. The high silt load in the rivers of Bangladesh causes many islands to appear during the dry season in the middle of the rivers. There is little in the way of security on these islands and they are therefore a place for the landless to go in the hope that they can grow a small crop before the river reclaims the land. The aim of this project is to provide empowerment and security to the landless who squat on a large island in the north.

The next stage of the Action Aid project to help these communities has now started. The immediate aims are:

- to facilitate improvements in the living conditions of 218 persons in the first year with an additional 120 persons in each of the two remaining years;
- to establish an additional 6 self-help groups per year from a present level of 15 such groups and also the formation of savings groups and cooperatives;
- to improve health facilities for an additional 50 persons per year from a present level of 110 persons, and the establishment of facilities to improve the health of the community such as a latrine programme and a kitchen garden programme;
- and to help raise the family income of those in the programme by 15% per year through an income generation programme.

The project is already providing some schooling for the children but the new project will also encompass a continuing education programme including the establishment of a community library.

Of importance is that the programme will also extend to the floodable region next to the river adjacent to the islands of concern. Here the poor will receive loans to help with relocation to more dependable regions away from the river.

Personal Stories

Our Visit to the SEDS Farm

Myra Marcus

My husband Gideon and I met Lyn and Ian many years ago when they came to Perth. We were very impressed with the way AAA was run and especially Ian and Lyn's passion and drive towards getting help to very needy children in some of the poorest villages in Andhra Pradesh. We sponsor several children and enjoy hearing of the improvement in their lives.

Although we have been to Southern India before, there was always some reason we were not able to get out to SEDS to have a look at what went on there. So, it was with great excitement that we found out that Lyn, Ian and their granddaughter were going to be in India at the same time as us and that it was possible for a visit to the farm.

During the course of several e-mails to and from Lyn during the year, we were able to tie up a date that suited everyone. Maps were drawn and sent to us and we organised a taxi with a driver who knew the area. The day of our journey to the farm duly arrived and we invited our friends Amy and Moshe Shamam and Michal Duvdevani to join us for the adventure of leaving our dusty village and making our way to the farm. Unfortunately we were not able to visit any later in the month of January, and would therefore not get to see the children as they were still on holiday from school. We still looked forward to seeing what went on at the farm and showing our friends. The visit was going to be an interesting one for us as Lyn told us elderly men and women from

neighbouring villages were being bussed in and they would receive a bath, new clothes and a meal. We were invited to participate in this if we liked.

After a very long and dusty trip from Puttaparthi, where we were staying, we turned into a driveway that took our breath away. It was so dry and hot along the way and suddenly we entered into a lush and green oasis. We were met by everyone and taken into the office where we talked about the school, the teachers and life on the farm. We were especially interested in the circumstances that led to the children coming to live at the farm. Hearing of the very difficult lives some of these children had before coming to live at SEDS and they way Manil, Rajen and everyone involved with SEDS opened their hearts to the children and the surrounding villages both impressed and deeply humbled us. The enormity of the task and the passion and drive of everyone involved in making the lives of the surrounding villagers and their children better made me think long and hard for many months after our trip about the privileged lives we lead in Australia. Even now, nearly a year later, It still makes me stop and take stock of things when I get involved with the daily "grind".



We spent a wonderful day helping to give out food and clothing to the old folk who came for the day from all over and hearing about their lives was an eye opener. When I looked around to see how my husband and friends were doing I was not surprised to see a lot of eyes brimming with tears – I was happy to be wearing sunglasses!

After the distribution of the clothes and food we went back to Manil and Rajen's home and were given a wonderful lunch. It was inspiring listening to Rajen talk about the various programmes. Earlier we had looked at the Watershed Management Program and some of the craft-work that was for sale and Rajen explained to us the way the communities were involved. We could see for ourselves the positive impact on both the landscape and the people.

All too soon it was time to head back. All the way back our taxi driver kept telling us in broken English that he had never seen such a place before and he couldn't believe the goodness that he had witnessed. We couldn't agree more with him and none of us could put into words how important our visit to the SEDS farm was. Our friends Amy and Moshe now sponsor four children, and Michal one child, and Gideon and I feel very privileged that we are able to help make a little bit of difference.

Give a life changing gift this holiday season...

Why not give something special to your friends or family and give something extra special to people who haven't got much at all. By sponsoring a child you'll help improve their education and health, giving them the opportunity to attend school regularly (with school fees fully paid for) and provide them with a uniform and books and regular health checks (for at least 12 months).

India Projects Updates

All Bengal Women's Union

Anne-Marie Maltby and Joy Handley

The last 12 months have been a difficult period for ABWU as the mainly voluntary staff continue to cope with the passing of Mrs Banerjee. Girls from other Government homes for rehabilitation have continued to be sent to ABWU over the year, with most girls being uneducated and having suffered abuse at the hands of their parents or others. Although few can be admitted to schools, over the past year ABWU has remained committed to giving them a start on basic education before joining vocational training.

Over the past year, twenty girls have undertaken full time training on Cutting & Tailoring and Machine Knitting Projects, with several other girls trained on a part time basis. Also, computer training has continued at the Children's Home. It is particularly inspiring to hear that one of the visually impaired students, who is now in her final year will sit final exams in 2007 and hopes to become a teacher. In recent months she was awarded 1st Prize in recitation and during her times at ABWU she teaches the young girls music and tells them stories. Children's Home have commenced making their

Christmas Cards and these should reach us in good time. Orphan girls had one trip to the beach, which they all enjoyed very much.

Unfortunately malaria cases have increased over the past year, however medical funds have been able to provide treatment for malaria, as well as help in offsetting the cost of new girls' health checks and medication requirements.

In the coming year ABWU are considering undertaking another round of Tailoring and Knitting projects, however this is dependent on available funding. The Women's Union also hopes to employ two more teachers - one teacher for Canteen and Catering training and one teacher for basic training and commence a new Weaving Project.

World Food Day Lunch in Bright

Once again, for the sixth year running the world food day lunch has been a fantastic success! Supported by Patricia Simone of "Simone's of Bright", seventy five people had a wonderful time and \$2,355 was raised to assist with projects for the All Bengal Women's Union.

Thanks to Simone, her staff and the Business and Professional Women's Group of Bright for their ongoing support and generosity. The board would also like to extend its thanks to Joy Handley, who continues to do marvellous work in organising and running this function.

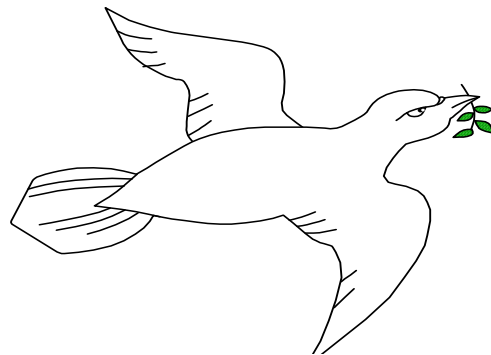
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**The Board of Directors,
together with family and
friends wish you a peaceful
and happy holiday period.**



ACTION AID AUSTRALIA – REMITTANCE ADVICE

I would like to help Action Aid’s work in the following way:

- **Make a general donation : \$_____**

- **Support Village Communities in project activities**

Bangladesh (Symbiosis) Vocational Training for Women TTIS

India (SEDS) – Watershed Management Project

India (SEDS) - Womens’ Self Help Groups

India (SEDS) – School Development

India (SEDS) – Medical Fund for sponsored children

India (ABWU) – Special projects

India (ABWU) – Medical Fund for sponsored children

- **\$25.00 Membership – 01/07/06 to 30/06/07**

- **Information re Bequest (Tick the box)**

- **Begin a Child Sponsorship in :**

India (ABWU) - All Bengal Womens’ Union in Calcutta)

India (S.E.D.S.) in Central Southern India

The cost to sponsor a child for :

1 month = \$20.00

6 months = \$110.00

3 months = \$55.00

12 months = \$220.00

Name : _____ Title : _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode _____

Please advise if receipt to be in a different name to the sender.
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