

Action Aid Australia Ltd

Chairperson's Report 2006-07

Anne-Marie Maltby

It is extremely gratifying to be able to report that support for Action Aid Australia continues to increase and that we have been able to provide additional assistance to virtually all of our projects as well as sponsor a totally new project in the Philippines. This has been done without resorting to hard sell methods or invasive cold calling, and feedback confirms support of our non aggressive approach.

Our income increased by 14% and, after being quite cautious last year, we were able to increase disbursements by 28%. Once again, our administrative costs were extremely low at 13.7% of which 7.9% were expended on travel to projects. These travel costs are donated by the board members and advisors responsible for the projects, leaving only 5.8% required for In-Australia expenditure. I would like to comment on this.

There has been increasing interest from the media and charity 'watchdog' organizations, both here and internationally for controls on the proportion of donations that can be spent on administration and fundraising. One US government program specifically requires that their participating organizations have low overheads and must certify that their combined administrative and fundraising costs constitute no more than 25% of their total revenues. Unlike the US, we have no mandatory disclosure of these proportions so I had difficulty in finding data to compare other Australian NGOs. Givewell, the Australian charity research centre, was able to tell me only that the average cost for fundraising alone was around 20% of income. The total figure when combined with administrative costs would be considerable higher. The low level of our administrative costs is quite exceptional and provide testimony to our standards and sense of accountability. This is a tribute to all of those who work to ensure that the greatest possible amount goes towards the doing the greatest good.

In South India we continue, through SEDS, to be involved with watershed management, community education and self help groups, income generating activities and sponsorship for children's' schooling. In Bengal, we continue to support ABWU sponsorship for the housing and schooling of orphaned and destitute girls and funding for their vocational training projects. We have a total of 235 sponsorships in India, a significant increase over last year with the majority being SEDS.

In Bangladesh, the TTIS project provides sewing training, and Jamuna River project provides support in the areas of education, micro-credit and health.

In the Philippines, it was particularly gratifying to see the start of the Kalinga Village Project. This is an innovative, community based and cost effective program with great potential. It has been created and initiated by Dr Cecily Neil, one of our specialist advisors who has broad knowledge in this field as well as extensive experience in the Philippines. The project is being funded by donations from the estate of Cecily's late mother Marie, who shared her concern for the children of developing countries. We would like to thank Cecily for the enormous effort and spirit that she has put into this.

When I first went to India, I had the opportunity to see some of the really effective work being done by some of the NGOs there and this made me to want to be involved. I did some research into Australian NGOs and was so impressed by Action Aid that I rang Ian and Lyn Pickering. They gave me an invitation to the next meeting which I accepted, little knowing that I would be sitting here in October 2007 giving a report as the Honorary Chairman. It has been a great privilege. My initial impression of AAA hasn't changed except that I now have a much greater appreciation of what our team do. I am impressed at how much can be achieved by a small group of volunteers and their supporters, despite little corporate or government support.

There is a great deal of work involved in the fundraising activities and day-to-day administration of AAA and we would like to thank all who have been involved. The greatest burdens seem to fall on the same people and special thanks are due to those who have been doing this work year after year. We rely on their good nature to keep managing their particular areas with great competence. That is the nature of small NGOs run by volunteers and the reason why we are able to operate so effectively. I would like to thank all of the AAA team and particularly single out Lyn Pickering, who runs our office as well as all of the SEDs sponsorships, Chris Pittendrigh, our secretary and Andrea Pickering, our treasurer who shoulder the bulk of our administration and have a constant stream of AAA work to do on top of their normal day to day activities.

We would all also like to give thanks to all our members and supporters. Your donations, both of money and time, make these projects and programs possible. Your feedback and general support help to make it worthwhile. Of course, for all concerned, nothing makes it more worthwhile than the knowledge that AAA continues to make a difference to the lives of others, not just now, but for the future.

Thank-you all.

Anne-Marie Maltby
Hon Chairman

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

Newsletter Editor– Jess Fliegner

ACRONYMS

So what do those letters actually mean, and what do these groups do?

AAA: Action Aid Australia is the name we are known by today. Our organisation, which works in developing countries carrying out humanitarian programs, has been in operation since 27th January, 1962. The Australian office is currently operated by Honorary Directors and volunteers. We liaise with, support, and work beside non government organisations in developing countries

FTWHL: For Those Who Have Less The organisation began in 1962 under the name For Those Who Have Less. During the 1980's the name was changed to add Action Aid Australia.

NGO: Non Government Organisation An NGO is typically a non-profit organisation which is independent of the government. Action Aid works with numerous NGO's including SEDS and Symbiosis as long term partners. These organisations are registered and recognised development organisations within their own country.

ACFID: Australian Council for International Development ACFID is an independent national association and support network for Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development. Action Aid Australia is a member of ACFID and as such has access to current and updated news on development in Australia and abroad as well as numerous seminars on issues of development run by ACFID.

ABWU: All Bengal Womens' Union The Homes for Children and young women are in Calcutta, India. There are currently 65 young people being sponsored at ABWU through Action Aid Australia.

SEDS: Social Education and Development Society situated in central southern India was formed over 26 years ago by Rajen and Manil Joshua. Action Aid Australia's primary project focus with SEDS since our involvement began in 1990 has been in the field of Watershed Management. Over the project years we have included tree planting, bund wall repairs, fish seeding, womens' self help groups and employment of older citizens to look after the new plantation stopes of Tamarind trees.

SEDS Child Sponsorship (Social Education and Development Society) Currently there are 175 children attending school in the SEDS area of developmental work. Extension to child sponsorship commenced in early 1995. The children selected for the program have come from villages where Watershed Management has been carried out, and where VO'S (Village Organisations) collectively come together to make decisions for the betterment of their entire local community.

Symbiosis is a non governmental organisation which operates a range of community development initiatives in Bangladesh. Its main aim is to promote human development in harmony with the environment, with a special emphasis on promoting social and economic empowerment amongst the poor and marginalised to enable people to live with dignity. Action Aid Australia has funded a Technical Training Program (TTIS) in conjunction with Symbiosis, which provides sewing training, hair dressing and beauty training to both men and women from

marginalised communities. This funding has come from Action Aid Australia members and donors. Currently, Action Aid Australia funds the Jamuna River Development Project (see below) through Symbiosis.

JRDP: Jamuna River Development Project This project is run in conjunction with the non-governmental organisation Symbiosis. Every year when the river overflows the sandbar islands on which the poverty-stricken Jamuna people live are washed away, leaving a mass of displaced peoples. This project works with these people through education, micro-credit and health programs. This project has been funded by a late Action Aid Australia member/donor and his wife.

Healthy Village Project This project, which commenced this year, is focussed on working with communities in the Kalinga Province, Philippines so they are able to diagnose the key water and environmental sanitation problems in their own community, to realize the possible impact of these problems, and to plan low-cost strategies for overcoming these problems. It is being funded by an Action Aid Australia member and donor.

Bangladesh Projects Updates



Inside a School at Jamuna River

Symbiosis-TTIS

Nazma Monowar

The Technical Training Programme (TTIS) has been particularly successful in training young women in the areas of hairdressing and beauty. One such success story is that of Bobby's, a 20 year old female living in Netrokona. Following the sudden death of her father, Bobby and her brother took on the responsibility of supporting the family. This was very difficult, with her two sisters and two brothers forced to discontinue their education and at times go without food. Bobby found about the symbiosis program through her uncle and soon joined the beauty parlor program, finishing the course after a couple of months. Following this Bobby was then taken on as a beautician at a local parlour. Today, Bobby is running that parlour very efficiently and is helping her family and her two brothers are going to school. Bobby is really happy with her family and with Symbiosis.

For the people living on *chars* (sandbars) in the middle of the Jamuna River, life is tough. Cut off from 'mainland' Bangladesh, the island *chars* have no electricity or roads and very few Government services. Coming and going is difficult, hampering communications and trade and leaving the *char* inhabitants isolated and vulnerable. As if this wasn't enough, the river floods each year, bringing disease and threatening to sweep away large tracts of land.

It is in response to the needs of the *char* dwellers that Symbiosis commenced the Jamuna River Development Project (JRDP) project in partnership with Action Aid Australia. Located in a village called Lokhipur, the project commenced four years ago following surveys that revealed high levels of poverty on the *chars*. Opportunities were limited and with no school, there was simply no way the children could gain an education. Instead of their young fingers gripping pencils, children would be forced to take up a sickle and to work for a living. It was no surprise then that as Symbiosis staff discussed the community's needs, a school emerged at the top of the list.

So it was a big occasion when the JRDP School began. The community not only helped put up the simple corrugated iron structure, they happily moved it when it was threatened by river erosion in 2004. Since the school started, hundreds of children have attended, gaining basic education from kindergarten up to class 5. By the time they have graduated, the children are much more likely to continue their education because they are both habituated with study and old enough to travel the long distance to the nearest Government school.

At present, 178 children are studying at the JRDP School in Lokhipur. Resources are basic and the education simple, but the school is well regarded by the local community and the students study hard for their four-times-yearly exams. Fees are kept extremely low to ensure that even the poorest children are not excluded. However, recently it was possible to add an extra room to the school, funded entirely by community contributions since the school began. In time it is hoped that as the other activities of JRDP help the poor to break the cycle of poverty, the community will even develop the capacity to take over the running of the school themselves. Thus the children at Lokhipur will continue to benefit from their 'school on a sandbar' for many years to come.



Children playing leapfrog at Jamuna River School

Philippines Project Update

The Healthy Village Project

Cecily Neil

Kalinga is a mountainous province in the north of the Philippines: some of its villages lack of vehicular access and can take 6 to 8 hours to reach by foot. A number of different tribal groups live in the province – generally peaceable, although occasional tribal disputes with associated killings erupt. Educational levels in the rural areas tend to be low, with a significant proportion of some tribal groups being illiterate. The main means of livelihood for villagers are rice and wheat cultivation. Pigs and hens are also raised, with both poultry and pigs roaming freely in villages.

Key health problems in the province include diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections, tuberculosis, malaria (including drug resistant malaria), parasitism and malnutrition. The risk of the spread of these illnesses is exacerbated by a number of water and environmental sanitation issues, including poor access to safe drinking water, good breeding conditions for mosquitoes, open defecation being practiced in some communities, no means of safe garbage disposal and animal management practices that can result in significant risks to human health.

Between 1998 and 2003, Kalinga was one of six provinces participating in a bilateral ADB-AusAID funded Project with a significant community health development component. One cornerstone of this Project was helping NGOs to work closely with 14 villages to promote good health. It became very clear from this Project that to improve health in these communities, it was not enough just to disseminate health messages – communities had to be convinced that illness in the family was not ‘just part of life’ or ‘God’s plan for mankind’ – rather that the occurrence of illness was something that members of the community had some control over, and that to exercise this control needed the community to work together. Through intensive one-on-one work with villages, it was possible to help the villagers recognize just how much they could improve their health situation themselves, and to start to do so.

The AusAID project was phased out in 2003, but on a return visit by one of the former project team in 2005, it was found that much of the earlier health improvement in some of these communities had been sustained, and that the Provincial Health Office was endeavouring to replicate the work – but struggling with lack of funds. While working one-on-one with villages to help them improve their own health situations had proved very effective, it was clearly financially impractical for the Provincial Health Office to do this with every village in the Province. Consequently it was decided to work with the Provincial Health Office in Kalinga to:

1. to continue to reduce the incidence of water and environmental-related illnesses in villages by helping the villagers to change behavior that is increasing the risk of the transmission of such illnesses.
2. to trial a community-based health intervention strategy which can be used to reach a large number of villages in a cost-effective manner and hence can be replicated in other Provinces.

The main focus of the Project is the development of very simple manuals specific to the Kalingan context that can be used by communities to diagnose the key water and environmental sanitation problems in their own community, to realize the possible impact of these problems, and to plan low-cost strategies for overcoming these problems. Intensive training courses are being held for representatives of any interested communities in how to use these manuals and how to go about encouraging health behavior change. Those communities

interested in continuing to participate after the training are then mentored over a period of time. Small amounts of money may be provided to help communities undertake action necessary to remove barriers to behavioral change, such as money for the purchase of materials to construct sanitary latrines in the village – however, such money is only provided once the community has started to take action themselves.

Progress to date has included the development of draft manuals which will be refined over time, dissemination of information about the Project in order that any villages interested in participating know how to become involved, and some initial training.



Children collecting water in Kalinga Province

Employee Donation Schemes/Workplace Giving

Many companies support their staff in Employee Donation Schemes (also called Workplace Giving). These schemes match employee donations, making them doubly effective.

Currently we are registered on the BHP Employee Donation Scheme. If your work has a similar scheme then consider adding Action Aid Australia to their list of charities, making your donation even more effective!

India Projects Updates

SEDS - The Lungs of the Nearby Hills

T.Bhagva Reka

Every month at SEDS the newsletter THE GLOBAL SEDS is produced by the students. The authors of the articles are sponsored children who live at the SEDS Hostel. Bhagya, the author of the article below is an excellent student whose English language skills are very advanced.

Manil and Rajen are the power behind SEDS. Their main job is to motivate people to grow plantations in Andhra Pradesh. The trees are very important because they give us oxygen, without oxygen we cannot survive. On the other hand, plants also make the environment look beautiful and they can give us fruits, flowers, wood, medicines etc. Ayurvedic is now very popular; the leaves are used for nice soaps and creams. You see plants give us many things to use in our daily life. It is important to take care of them and treat them with respect.

The tenth of October I was very happy to go sowing seeds in the nearby hills. The drive to the hills was exciting. We took one of the many jeeps that were crowded with all happy, singing and committed people. Because of the rain the hills looked totally green. The land was covered with bright grasses, bushes and young trees. The air smelled fresh and healthy. We stopped by the dam, got some seeds and a stick and in pairs we started our task. For every seed we had to make a little hole in the dry earth, then put a seed in it and cover it up. The sun was setting, the sky got an orange color and reflected in the water off the dam.

On our trip we saw a wolf. This was the first time in my life I saw a wolf. It made me realise that the work SEDS does is also good for the animals.

We returned to the hostel at 6 o'clock. I was very happy and it was really a good day. I am requesting all people to plant a tree. Not only to plant it, but to look after it very well. **The trees are the lungs of our world.** The nearby hills are a treasure and the future for our local area. We better cherish it.

Footnote from Lyn Pickering

Well done Bhagya. Another article by Bhagya was "Play and Learn" Other articles written by SEDS sponsored children include – T. Madhuri who wrote about "The Snake that liked to go to school. Deepu wrote "The Happy School", and Pallavi wrote "The Reading Challenge".

The SEDS School is an English Medium school which several of our sponsored children attend. The majority of our 175 sponsored students attend their local village Primary school, or attend the larger Secondary schools in larger villages. Life for them is far more basic, however for many of these children, attending school has become a happy way of life, and one which their parents did not have.

AAA is working towards supplying more books and equipment into the village schools. The books and equipment will be for **ALL** the children attending the school. If you have an interest in the education of children, you may like to consider donating funds for this program through SEDS.

ps.

In the past month SEDS received five inches of rain in one day, and two inches of rain a few days later. Average annual rainfall for this area is 10 inches, and most of that falls on a small number of days each year.

The past year has been a very positive and encouraging period for ABWU, with a group of new, younger and vibrant members achieving much and continuing to have a very good rapport and communication with Action Aid. This relationship has further strengthened following Joy Handley's (Action Aid Honorary Advisor) trip to ABWU in March this year.

Currently, Action Aid is funding Tailoring, Machine Knitting and the restarted Weaving Projects. There are 16 girls attending the Tailoring/Knitting course where they are being trained to make salwar suits, blouses, tops for under saris and dresses, kaftans, children's dresses, aprons etc. as well as fine embroidery to enhance the above garments. These students are working 6 days a week and are all residents of ABWU. The restarted Weaving Project began with four girls, with another four disabled girls from Government Homes expected to join shortly. In order to keep up with the strong community demand two new looms have been ordered and older looms repaired. Through this program the girls are making bed covers, tablemats, napkins etc, with the sale of woven items helping fund the continuation of the course.

Over the last year the orphaned children were also taken on a trip to the seaside resort of Bakkhali, with the girls and their housemothers stayed in the Tourist Lodge. The group was given special treatment by staff and the trip was a great success. Hopefully, another trip will take place shortly.

Since Joy's trip communication and reporting has improved greatly. Prior to her departure Joy and Anne Marie (Chairperson) spent many hours working on essential guidelines for ABWU which included bi-monthly reports in line with those required by AUSAID and developing set 'Project Proposals'. These requirements were all presented by Joy to the Members of the ABWU Committee and so far much of the requirements have been achieved and bi-monthly reports are arriving without prompting...a minor miracle in India!

There have been many successes over the past year - sponsorship is at a higher level, annual school reports which arrived mid - year show that several girls are very high achievers, others are doing quite well and those that are struggling are getting help from tutors. Through the year we have also been sending out handmade Christmas Cards and reports on the girls' progress. Within Melbourne, Joy has spoken to two schools about her trip and last years 'World Food Day' lunch raised in excess of \$2000.

ANOTHER RUNAWAY SUCCESS IN BRIGHT**Joy Handley**

Monday 19th November saw 70 people arrive at Bright RSL for the now re-knowned annual World Food Day Luncheon to raise funds for "Joy's Girls" at ABWU.

Patrizia Simone of Simone's Restaurant has been donating the yummy Italian fare for seven years. It was a very hot day, but with air conditioning and the company of so many friends, in excess of \$1,800 was raised.

A fantastic result but only possible with the help of so many local people to help in the kitchen, with raffles etc., all working hard all day. Everyone had a fantastic time.

Louise, whom I met in Kolkata in March came over from Wagga Wagga and showed a short video of "Life in Kolkata" and at ABWU. She also spoke of her involvement at the Home with her colleague Paul, who with Louise's assistance did so much work there.

A wonderful, wonderful day, and worth all the hard work.

Child Sponsorship

SEDS- Five beautiful little girls requiring a sponsor to remain at school



Left photo - My name is **Gowthammi**. I am six years old and in 2nd class at school. I have a nine year old brother and we live with our parents in a small village, My mother is not well and this makes it difficult for me to attend school, but I like to go

Right – Hello, my name is **Sireesha** and I am six and in 2nd class. My mother died three years ago from a snake bite. I have a little brother who is four. My father remarried and now has a new baby girl. My stepmother does not look after me, but my grandmother does. School is nice and I go all the time.

The stories of our children are always heart breaking. The girl children in spite of the hardships they face on a daily basis, appear happy to be attending school regularly. They do this in between supporting sick family members, or caring for the new baby in the home, whilst Mother goes to work in the fields.

Hello, I am **Navanitha** and I am six. I like going to school and am in Grade 2. I live with my grandmother in a small village. My parents have both gone to Bangalore to work and I do not see them very often.

I am **Padmavathi** and I am eight years old and go to school. I am in fourth grade. My parents left me and my younger sister in our village with my grandmother, and I have not had any contact with them for six years. My grandmother struggles to feed us both, and we like going to school.

My name is **Sharanya** and I am eight years old. My seven year old sister and I both go to school, but it is difficult sometimes, because my father is paralysed and unable to work. My mother works in the fields and looks after our family. My grandmother lives with our family.

Please contact Lyn at the office if you can help – 03 9704 6315 or via email on lipickering@bigpond.com (P.O. Box 42, Narre Warren LPO, 3805)

ABWU – 5 young girls requiring a sponsor



My name is Laxmi and I am 5 years old. When I was one month on my mother passed away of tuberculosis and after my father remarried I was forced onto the streets. I was picked up off the street by a Girl's halfway home and cured of tuberculosis. Now I am at ABWU and am enjoying school.

I am Pieu and I am 7 years old and go to school at ABWU. After my father left my family my mother had no source of income. Worried about my protection and education, she contacted the Welfare Directorate who got me admitted to ABWU, where I currently am learning Bengali and English alphabets and rhymes.

My name is Priyanka and I am seven years old. My father died in January this year and my mother had a stroke then as well. After this I was admitted into ABWU and am currently studying in class there.

I am Rriyanka, Priyanka's twin sister. Like Priyanka I was admitted to ABWU following my father's death and mother's stroke.

My name is Subhadra and I am seven years old. After my father left the family in 2002 I took shelter at my grandparents home with my mother. My mother could not earn enough to maintain two daughters and was approached Social Welfare Directorate West Bengal. I was admitted to ABWU this year an am currently in non-formal education class.

IMAGES FROM WORLD FOOD DAY DINNER AT BAYLES



World Food Day Dinner at Bayles – 17th November - \$3000 plus

What a great night of friendship and fellowship! We raised in excess of \$3000.00, a truly wonderful effort by many people. This amount was raised without raffles on the night, but through the generosity of people who attended, and many non attendees.



Seventy five adults and eight young people from a few months to 12 joined us.

The rain held off and people were encouraged to sit at the many tables under cover in the garden. Rain would have been quite acceptable anytime.



We were also fortunate to receive a donation of six boxes of vegetables from Peter and Odilia, who even though not able to attend on the evening, arranged a pickup of vegetables for our salads, with donations for the remainder of the vegetables contributing to our overall result.

Special thanks to Geoff and Andrea for again opening their home at the farm in Bayles and for all their efforts to make this the success it was, and to Lyn and Ian for their support of Geoff and Andrea as joint hosts.

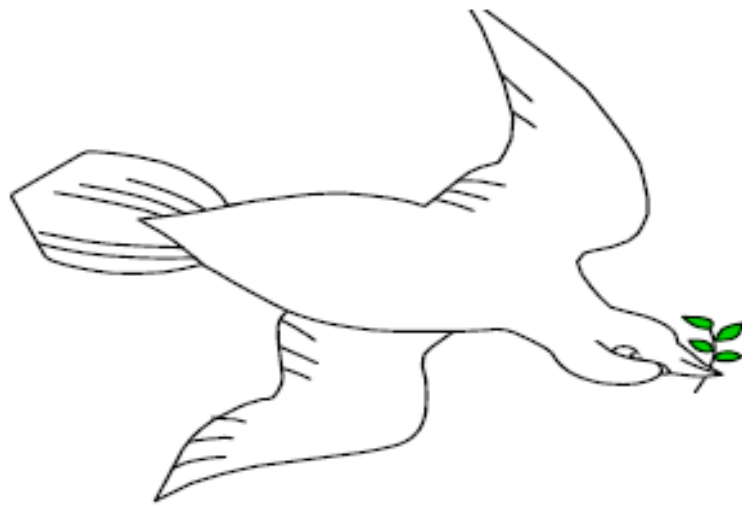


Thanks also to the many helpers either on the night or prior to the evening – Anne Marie for the salads, including the very popular rice and lentil salad and her kitchen duties, Laurelle, Tania, Chris, Travis, Joy W, Rudy and Joy D, for their valuable support. To Murray and Renee for assistance in the afternoon, to Andrew and Judy for the tent and the eggs, and to Geoff M. for the use of his incredible home built spit.

You may be interested to know that all the food and equipment was donated and the labour freely given, and this reflected in our fantastic result. The money raised from this dinner has been earmarked for SEDS (India) project and school development work.

Thanks again to everyone for your support for our World Food Day Dinner at Bayles.

The images from our dinner were taken by a young man with a passion for photography and food.



and maybe possibly better
friends with you a benefit
together with family and
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email – dwalsh68@optusnet.au

Peter Schreurs & Sons Vegetable Farm

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Vegetables from the farm are available at the
fortnightly Berwick Farmers Market held at
The Old Cheese Factory on a Saturday

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) - Women's 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 – 01/07/07 to 30/06/08**

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

- **Begin a Child Sponsorship in :**

India (ABWU) - All Bengal Women's 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.
All gifts of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible (receipt issued)
P.O. Box 42, Narre Warren LPO, 3805