



## Annual Report 2015

Generous supporters helped us raise income of \$45,187 (2014: \$30,706) that enabled us to not only continue our scholarship programme for 200 young scholars in 2 provinces in Vietnam but to maintain our foreign currency grants despite a substantial weakening of the Australian dollar. This programme cost \$29,892, an extra \$6,520. Reducing the grants would have caused difficulties among the impoverished families we help.

We were able to extend our micro-banking activities by \$4,100 by lending to 13 families in Ha Giang Province to enable them to commence small-scale pig farming. This follows a highly successful trial run during 2014 that saw 4 poor families reveal surprisingly entrepreneurial talents.

An additional \$3,300 launched our trial Pass the Pig scheme, where 27 poor families received a gift of a piglet sow to start them off on small ventures also. The scheme requires that they share their gift for a short term as breeding commences. Their commune comprises some 540 families of whom about 85 have been assessed as living in poverty, and we hope that passing the pigs about will make a difference over time. Proximity to the China border ensures there exists a ready and accessible market for pork.

Our core activity is supporting education and we support community development in other ways when a suitable opportunity arises and funds permit, hence micro-banking and the pig scheme. We travel without blinkers and occasionally good causes come to our attention that deserve our consideration.

We were approached about helping build a kindergarten to replace a private dwelling that had become unsafe and we were happy to provide a concrete floor at a cost of \$1,030, with the project overseen by Dream School, a dedicated Hanoi volunteer organisation. The facility has been completed.

We mentioned in our 2014 report our hope that we might be able to help provide first aid training in Ha Giang. It so happened that St John Ambulance WA was in the process of developing such a programme and it was a pleasure to watch their highly skilled personnel in action in Hanoi. We hope in time to see Ha Giang enjoy the programme.

It came to our attention during our 2015 scholarship trip that there is minimal support for promising students from poor families as regards higher education and we intend to support a few university students and perhaps assist a few youngsters in acquiring a trade they can take back to their provinces in order to set up a small business or earn a decent wage.

There is a young man in Quang Nam Province who needs an eye operation so he can turn his life around - he will have that operation. \$1,300 seems a small price but one that is well beyond the resources of his family.

A gifted girl who lives under extremely difficult circumstances will in a couple of years attend university to study whatever she chooses and she will graduate debt-free and able to support her ageing and troubled parents. Her wish at present is to teach in her home village.

We run motorcycle tours in Vietnam in conjunction with probably the best outfit in Vietnam to help raise funds and the proceeds enable us to occasionally stray from our normal activities. In

due course we hope to run 2 or 3 different routes annually with members on each trip indicating our commitment to quality and safety.

We have a cash reserve of \$17,000 to insulate us against continuing currency weakness and we are on the alert for sustainable community development projects; we are happy to participate in small partnerships projects with quality local organisations, particularly volunteer outfits like Dream School that demonstrate an ability to reach communities in need by really stretching a dollar.

The support our small charity enjoys is humbling. Our growing network of friends and supporters both in WA and Vietnam enables us to constantly search for ways to support communities we operate in and we are particularly delighted at slowly finding support within the Perth Vietnamese community.

The activities of charities and NGOs has rightly remained under close scrutiny. We are pleased to advise that despite disclosure requirements that show modest expenses, all overheads were covered by members' private contribution; travel is by economy class (or cheaper wherever possible) and a food and accommodation allowance of \$30 per day will reluctantly need to be increased to \$40 per day. Your money goes towards projects, not fine dining or elegant travel.

We thank our supporters for once again making the year a memorable one for really good and deserving people. And of course, for all of us at Platypus.

Bob Greer

Chairman

14 December 2015