



Annual Report 2017

Generous supporters helped us raise income of \$49,910 (2016: \$36,000) 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 continued weak Australian dollar. This programme cost \$29,246, (2016 \$28,960). Reducing the grants would have caused difficulties among the impoverished families we help.

We funded \$5,000 in micro-banking by lending to 9 families in Bac Me District in Ha Giang Province to enable them to commence silkworm farming. All existing clients are doing well, but we have extended 3 loans by 2 years due to unrelated family difficulties. There is once again a demand for such loans as government funds appeared to have been exhausted.

The Pass the Pig scheme has been temporarily suspended as our Vietnam partners experience difficulty in tracking the project which is working well. It was gratifying to see the government has launched a Pass the Pigeon scheme so as to help a greater number of people than their cow programme.

Our "Random acts of kindness" saw a young paraplegic presented with a wheelchair in the hills outside Quan Ba in Ha Giang Province after years spent in a dingy back room. The chair came to us via kindred souls in Perth, and the young man spends his days zooming around the village with music provided by a ghetto blaster of some sort that has rigged up for him.

Our university student in HCMC continues to perform exceptionally well, but we have reluctantly terminated support in Danang as the student failed to provide adequate proof of academic results.

We commenced an investigation into Vocational Education and Training (VET) opportunities, and established a relationship with KOTO in Hanoi, who run a superb hospitality course. In October 2017 KOTO accepted Dungg Dungg, a Kinh graduate from Quang Nam Province into its programme, and we hope she will be the first of many Platypus graduates to complete the course. She will have great employment opportunities in a booming tourist province. The 2 Han girls mentioned in our 2016 report were unsuccessful in their KOTO quest and we will learn from that.

Blue Dragon, a friendly Hanoi charity, runs a superb vocational guidance programme. We hope to persuade a teacher from Quang Nam Province to attend as vocational guidance appears to be poorly handled in more remote areas.

The gifted girl who lives under extremely difficult circumstances in Hoa Binh, mentioned in our 2016 report, continues to excel at school. She is now in year 11 and was due in 2018 to enter university. It appears university will no longer suit her circumstances, but we will investigate options.

The motorcycle fundraisers we run in Vietnam have been successful, but 2017/8 is proving to be a difficult year. We will learn from that and are already recovering from setbacks. Our attempt to employ a liaison officer in Hanoi has proved unsuccessful to date but this is a vital function and we will persist in our efforts.

I was honoured to receive the Merit Medal from the Vietnam Women's Union for assisting in the development of women. The award should of course have gone to our generous supporters and members, but they do not honour organisations. I was proud to accept the medal on behalf of all of you, and ensured that was understood by all present.

Our cash resources are currently \$15,000, but we have plans to restore that to a healthier level. In difficult times we may curtail gifting and micro-banking activities in the interests of security. Platypus continues to enjoy tremendous support, but we must become less reliant on the amazing, generous supporters who have been our pillars for many years.

We are excited at emerging support from our Vietnamese community, and at prospects of spreading our message more widely over the next year.

Supporting education remains our core activity, and we are happy to assist with community development in other ways when a suitable opportunity arises and funds permit. We travel without blinkers and occasionally good causes come to our attention that deserve our consideration; where possible, where we believe our supporters would like us to lend a helping hand, we step in.

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
28 November 2017