



## Annual Report 2018

Generous supporters once again helped us raise income of \$45,749 (2017: \$49,910) in the most difficult economic climate for many years. We had hoped to raise \$40,000, so we were able to add 10 Hmong students to our Ha Giang numbers to increase total student numbers to 210. We were also able to maintain our scholarship value at US\$110 per student despite a continued weak Australian dollar. This programme cost \$27,907 (2017 \$29,246).

We did no additional micro-lending as no suitable borrowers emerged. We did visit Bac Me District in Ha Giang Province where we had lent \$4,500 to 9 Tay women the previous year to enable them to commence silkworm farming. A recent report revealed average income for those living in poverty of US\$305-\$350pa; silkworm farmers can expect an income of AUD 4,000-6,000. We will monitor this closely with a view to expanding this activity. We have to date assisted 29 families with micro-loans – all have been successful and all but 4 loans repaid on due date. There have been 4 loan extensions but no defaults.

The Pass the Pig scheme is still in operation but we have not invested fresh funds as micro-lending appears the best use of funds at present. Community gifting of \$3,306 involved provision of 250 blankets for children at Lung Tam School. A couple of motorcyclists on one of our trips were disturbed at boarding school conditions and donated money to cover most of the cost. We saw the blankets during our scholarship trip and the kids were very pleased to have them before the onset of winter.

We sought to provide the young paraplegic who featured in our 2017 report with a sound system for his wheelchair but are advised he has rigged up a ghetto-blaster with the aid of some friends. A few ramps have been built around his village and he evidently roars about the place and now leads a very full social life. Our partners, the Vietnam Women's Union, are aware of our interest in his welfare and are keeping an eye on his progress.

Our university student in HCMC continues to perform exceptionally well and we hope to be able to assist with a little post-graduate study, possibly in Australia, to give her work credentials a boost. She is actively involved in helping poor communities in her spare time so our values are well and truly aligned.

Dungg Dungg, our young high school graduate from Quang Nam Province is completing her first year of VET training at KOTO in Hanoi. She has worked hard and is growing in confidence and we look forward to following her progress towards graduation in late 2019. Nolita Restaurant in Claremont has an ongoing copper coin corkage arrangement in place, and with their approval we intend passing on their generosity to KOTO who support youngsters from poor backgrounds so superbly. We hope to have 2 graduates enter the KOTO programme annually.

Nolita support enabled us also to help place 5 young high school graduate Dao girls from Ha Giang Province at KOTO on a special 6-month course designed to help them find employment in the homestay tourist accommodation field. We hope to increase our support in this area. I met them a

few months ago and they were very excited to be at KOTO and were looking forward to applying their new skills back in their home territory.

We have employed a young law graduate in the role of Liaison Officer in Hanoi on a part-time basis in order to improve our management capacity. She is doing well and we are starting to see the benefits of her efforts.

Our cash resources are currently \$20,000, up from \$15,000 last year, but we have plans to restore that to a healthier level. 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 now have 4 members from within our Vietnamese community who are keen to help us make a difference among the battlers we are privileged to support and we have high hopes that this will lead to greater results in future; as it is, 2019 will see in our First Millennium as we will provide our 1100<sup>th</sup> year of school education during that 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

22 November 2018