

Euroa Rotary Club International Service Project 2016-2019

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February, 2018, Update

Euroa Rotary Club conducts activities in the five Rotary International avenues of service – Club service; Vocational service, Community service, Youth service and International service.

Throughout the Rotary years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, the Club priority was community service and it resulted in a \$40000 contribution to Euroa Health Inc and specifically the successful construction of GraniteHill Aged Care Centre.

Throughout 2016/17; 2017/18 and 2018/19 the Club is focussing on international service. Our objectives are:

1. Promote Rotary initiatives in at least one of its focus areas of
 - 1.1 Promoting peace
 - 1.2 Fighting disease
 - 1.3 Provision of clean water, sanitation and hygiene
 - 1.4 Saving mothers and children
 - 1.5 Supporting education
 - 1.6 Growing local economies
2. Provide an opportunity for the current peer group within the Rotary Club of Euroa to participate in an international service project.
3. Ensure that the outcome is sustainable and will benefit a multitude of people.
4. The outcome must be locally owned and managed. Euroa Rotary Club will have no further responsibilities in relation to the project upon completion of the proposed work.

Originally (2016/17 Rotary year) the proposal was for the construction of a school at Kavovo in the Central Highlands of PNG. Unfortunately, due diligence of the proposal throughout the past 12 month period has resulted in a lack of traction with necessary partners resulting in too great a risk to the sustainability of the venture.

The focus has moved to a Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) sanctioned project in Cambodia titled "CHOICE Project Cambodia". The acronym CHOICE refers to Charitable Humanitarian Organisation In Cambodia by Expats. Its emphasis is on education, transportation, safe drinking water, food and medicinal needs. It's a registered non-government organisation with entities in Cambodia, Australia, United Kingdom and Germany. Its head is Ross Wright from Geelong and his family reside in the Benalla area. The leader of the project in Cambodia is Don Rosenfeldt. Don runs a luxury tourism transport operation in Cromer in NSW. It was formerly an eco-tourism venture taking tours in the Blue Mountains. Don is working with the Rotary Club of Dee Why Warringal in NSW.

CHOICE currently employs 14 Khmer locals. No Western people are paid.

Due diligence is underway re this project. A subcommittee comprising Mandy, Des, Peter, Bob and Michael has met. Communication with Don has been ongoing for the past month. Peter and Michael will travel to Cambodia early June to inspect the site and learn greater detail about the CHOICE project. Don and Ross are returning to Australia in April and we may catch up with them at that time.

Already CHOICE has purchased a 1.2 acre parcel of land nearby its current school. The current school is in rented inadequate premises. CHOICE has built an amenities block, store room, kindergarten, the start of a vocational training area, 2 western accommodation blocks and a road the length of its new property. It plans to build a 7 classroom school and a library. The money (\$US120000) to finance the current facilities came from a German source and 4 other sources. To us the money appears to have gone a long way and you would have to deem it well spent.

Our subcommittee is promising to contribute \$A60000 towards the construction of the classrooms and perhaps support for a waste management system. The Club contribution is \$A15000 (\$5000 from 2016/17 and \$10000 from 2017/18 Rotary years). Another source is contributing \$A45000. The money will most likely go to RAWCS and be used to pay wages for local builders and materials for the construction. We aim to contribute physically by sending over a team for a 10 day period to assist the builders. Our team will consist of physically capable volunteers who will pay their own way.

Our time line is July 2018 to June 2019. I think that our contribution influences plans and we are well placed to decide the timing in partnership with Don and Ross and the 10 person board of management. We are checking out the CHOICE Board to ensure that it is independent and not linked to any other organisation.

Information received from Don indicates that the four villages served by the proposed school have a severe waste management issue. Everything is thrown in the Mekong River tributary (Bassac River). We are in the process of contacting Engineers Without Borders Australia to see if we can obtain expertise and support in regard to a solution to this issue. Heidi Michael is the acting CEO at Engineers Without Borders Australia.

I am of the belief that Ross, Don and the 10 person Board of CHOICE are fair dinkum in their venture to support the Khmer people residing in this area. The families are very poor. The idea to establish accommodation blocks is wise. Many tour groups offer residential home stays in the holiday package and the money earned from this exercise supports the business model to sustain the facilities at the school. The school delivers vocational training and the people trained in hospitality provide meals and entertainment for the guests taking up home stay opportunities. The accommodation blocks and school are separate areas.

Des is the spokesperson for our subcommittee and he will continue to keep you informed. Mandy, Peter and Bob are working on a District Grant application and that may well turn into a Global Grant application in partnership with the Dee Why Warringah Rotary Club. Peter has made initial contact with Chris Taylor who is the President of the Dee Why Warringah Rotary Club. I think that maximising effort co-partnering Dee Why Warringah for a global grant is sensible and responsible.

Michael
February 18, 2018