



CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS TO THE 2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING **BARBARA MAY FOUNDATION**

I welcome members to the 2013 Annual General Meeting of the Barbara May Foundation.

Our Foundation was established in 2009 to honour Barbara May Browning and the values she stood for by supporting the work of her daughter Valerie and her grandson Andrew in providing a simple network of maternal healthcare in developing countries in Africa. Our Foundation aims to decrease the high incidence of women and babies who die or who are injured during childbirth.

DONATIONS

Donations received during the year ended June 30, 2013 totalled \$662,505 compared to \$261,717 in the previous year. The large increase in donations now allows us to fund the operations of two hospitals in Ethiopia and begin work on a maternity training centre in Tanzania.

We have received wonderful support from some major donors who I will mention later in this letter, but here I would like to thank the many hundreds of small organisations, schools, church groups and individuals who have chosen to support the work of the Barbara May Foundation with a donation. It is with the help of many hands that we are able to assist Valerie and Andrew's work and we are equally grateful for every bit of help.

THE BARBARA MAY MATERNITY HOSPITAL - MILLE

The Barbara May Hospital in Mille, Ethiopia is run by a local board under the guiding hand of Valerie and the Afar Pastoral Development Association (APDA). The hospital, which was completed only a couple of years ago, currently costs less than A\$200,000PA to run. We have financed the buildings and the operating costs mainly through donations from the Workplace Giving Program of the Sydney Local Health District. Through the generosity of those employees the Foundation can now fund the addition of an outpatient clinic and administration buildings and the purchase of a new ambulance – so vital to the outreach work of the hospital. We are so grateful for these donations as they have achieved a wonderful outcome for the Afar women of Ethiopia.

VISION MATERNITY CARE HOSPITAL – BARHIRDAR

In another part of Ethiopia, the Amhara District, the local Health Bureau has asked Dr Andrew Browning to build another charity maternity hospital located in Barhirdar. They have given a local entity – founded by Andrew – a rather rundown health centre to convert for this purpose. Andrew worked in Barhirdar for many years with the Hamlin Foundation. The Vision Maternity Care Hospital, as it is now known is providing free obstetric services and fistula repair to poor women who cannot afford such help.

With the help of Rotary International, we have guaranteed donations of \$500,000 over three years for the running costs and fit-out of this hospital. Although there is still work to be done, the centre is open for business and much success is being achieved. Fifty nine babies were safely delivered in September; in one day alone, nine births were recorded. This would be good number for an established regional hospital in Australia so it is a fantastic achievement for Andrew and his team, ex-pat volunteers, Dr Wilhelm and Sr Daphne Leefers, assisted by local midwives, and management headed by Birhanu Menber.

SELIAN LUTHERAN MISSION HOSPITAL – ARUSHA, TANZANIA

During 2013 Andrew has been planning a Centre For Excellence at the Mission Hospital in Arusha, Tanzania, to improve maternal health outcomes in Africa, particularly for women living in poverty. Our Foundation aims to help Andrew as he implements systems to train local maternal health providers in sound clinical skills and competency as well as treat women suffering with obstetric fistula. The work is underway and Andrew is being wonderfully assisted by ex-pat midwife Sister Katie Christie. Word is spreading of their excellent work and each month more women are arriving for help. In October, nearly 100 women delivered safely and for free – an increase from 60 in September! This initiative is in its infancy but we are already seeking assistance from interested donors and partners.

MEDICAL VOLUNTEERS

Some of the donations received go to support the volunteer medical professionals who work in the hospitals in Mille, Barhirdar and Arusha. Again, much of this funding comes from the DAK Foundation. The volunteers not only provide critical maternal care to those in need, but also train local medical support staff so that quality care can be sustained in the long term.

SPECIAL THANKS

In a few short years our donors have enabled us to build and operate hospitals dedicated to serving some of the poorest and most disadvantaged women in the world with basic maternity care. Valerie and Andrew have served in Africa for many years but the provision of finance by our donors enables them to provide more blessings for women in need of help. It is a matter of life or death.

This year, when Valerie was visiting Australia, a group of Southern Highland's women formed the Barbara May Fundraising Committee. Together they staged a very successful evening to welcome Valerie and we are sincerely grateful for their hard work and the continued support of the local residents – many who know the Browning's personally – who came out in force on a cold winter's night to hear about Valerie's work.

In February 2014, six women from Sydney and the Southern Highlands undertake the Mt Kilimanjaro Trek for Maternal Health raising funds for the Foundation. This is a tough trek and will be a significant personal challenge for the women taking part. Their adventure will culminate in a two-day visit to the Selian Hospital in Arusha where they will spend time with Andrew witnessing first-hand the work undertaken by the team there. As part of this trip the women are being sponsored by their personal networks and they have already raised significant funds for the BMF. Our thanks go out to them for this major commitment and contribution.

Finally, we are also assisted by Rotary International and Anglican Overseas Aid in the transferring of funds overseas and we thank them for their help.

We have created great expectation that we can help with our simple network of maternal healthcare. We look forward to continuing and building this work in Africa and trust that you will continue to support us so that we can do that.

Michael J. Sharpe AO
Chairman