



Barbara May Foundation
ABN 35 141 248 900

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS – JULY 2017

The work of Valerie Browning AM and Dr Andrew Browning in making childbirth safe in Africa continues to be supported by the Barbara May Foundation.

The success of the work at the Vision Maternity Care Hospital in Barhir Dah and the Barbara May Maternity Hospital in Mille (both in Ethiopia), and by Maternity Africa in Arusha and Dareda (Tanzania), has put pressure on the facilities and much progress this year has involved the building of new hospital facilities. However, many births in these countries still take place in rural villages, and many women can't access help. Maternal death in childbirth is still common and many suffer terrible injuries like Obstetric Fistula and the death of the baby.

The safe birth statistics of the hospitals run by Valerie and Andrew are exceptional; almost equal to that of developed countries. Having rightly earned the reputation for being among the safest places to have a baby in these regions, the units are regularly operating beyond capacity. Last year I reported that births in these four hospitals were running at 6,400 per annum. That figure has increased to 8,000 this year. One can only imagine the joy of so many poor and rural families who now have professional maternal healthcare available at no cost.

On 15 July, 2017 the Australian Ambassador to Ethiopia, His Excellency Mark Sawers, officiated at the opening of the new Vision Maternity Care Hospital (VMC) in Barhir Dah in the presence of two of our directors, Maryanne Ayres and Dr Sam Hargreaves, and our General Manager, Jo Crowley. Maryanne, Sam and Jo had gone to Africa to climb Mount Kilimanjaro for fundraising and to inspect building progress and operations in both Arusha and Barhir Dah. The new hospital doubles the capacity of the facility and importantly, greatly improves efficiency.

In 2015, Andrew's Tanzanian organisation, Maternity Africa, received a significant donation of \$US2.8 million from a prominent philanthropist to seed-fund the building and operations of a new 48-bed hospital comprising a maternity ward, midwife training centre and a ward for fistula repairs. This important complex, to be called Kivulini, is underway and should be completed by the end of 2017. Andrew and his team are currently working from the maternity centre at the Selian Hospital which the government has now stated, must charge for their services. Kivulini will not charge for its services and the new, purpose-built facility will more than double maternity capacity and importantly, provide purpose-built training facilities for local midwives and health extension staff.

In Mille, Ethiopia, Valerie and her team are enjoying the new facilities at the Barbara May Maternity Hospital (BMMH) now that the renovations and extensions have been completed. It has been a particularly difficult period in this part of the world, as it has been savaged by famine causing many serious population-wide health issues. Valerie's organisation, the Afar Pastoral Development Association, works across a number of community platforms including education and rural assistance. However, it is their work in maternity outreach for rural and remote women, safe birth at the BMMH, Female Genital Mutilation education, HIV testing and treatment, and family planning that is funded by the Barbara May Foundation through the generous Workplace Giving Programs of the Sydney Local Health District and the South West Sydney Local Health District. We remain extremely grateful for the ongoing support of these two organisations who significantly contribute to the day-to-day operations of this hospital.

THE FUTURE

Challenges

As discussed earlier, Valerie and Andrew have overseen considerable capital expansion of their projects. At the same time, as one expects in developing countries, the goal posts move often and we are regularly faced with unexpected events that impact our budgeting.

In Mille, apart from the famines, at a time when every cent counts, the funding for the rural outreach program, previously provided by an Australian semi-government department, stopped. This program is very close to our heart – as it is the nucleus of how our organisation began – that was to stop women dying in childbirth in their villages by firstly providing ex-pat doctors and midwives to train village birth attendants and local midwives, and then by building modern maternity units to service high-risk births. The Foundation has stepped in to fund this work at AUD\$120,000pa. We wish to find a champion to help us fund this program.

In Barhir Dar, the take-up of the maternity services at the Vision Maternity Care Hospital has been almost overwhelming, and the added capacity provided by the new hospital is urgently needed.

Both hospitals in Ethiopia have been affected by in-country politics that has seen a crack-down on NGO operations generally, and the limiting of work Visa's for expat volunteers to one month – previously three months. In addition, salaries in Ethiopia are steadily increasing (not a bad thing!), so this is increasing operating costs in both units.

In Arusha, Tanzania, the building of the new hospital was unexpectedly hit by a significant tax (VAT) imposed by the government. Many groups, including the BMF, came to the rescue, and the shortfall created by the tax was recovered, and the building is well on its way.

Now that the capital expansion of these major projects is largely complete, the Board, and Valerie and Andrew, are keen to see them settle into well-run facilities. As such, our focus moving forward will be the operational standards and efficiencies of each of the facilities. **Our combined aim will continue to be the guaranteed provision of free, professional maternal care for poor women, or those from remote areas, regardless of race, religion or financial capacity.**

We will continue to fund the education and development of local midwife and medical teams as this in turn provides tremendous benefits for the individuals themselves, and for their families and communities. Being an active partner in providing improved local impacts in the education and employment of young women is a key strategic aim.

We are not daunted by these challenges and see them as part and parcel of working in these regions. But we do need your continued support to meet and overcome them.

EXCITING NEWS

The Board is thrilled to announce that Dr Andrew Browning and his family will be returning to live and work in Australia in December. However, Andrew will retain a senior medical role in Africa returning four times a year to oversee the hospitals, outreach programs, and perform Obstetric Fistula surgery.

Andrew has been very pleased to secure the appointment of Judith Holden as his in-country CEO. Judith is a skilled and passionate leader of reproductive health programs in sub-Saharan Africa. With more than 25-years of experience in the clinical sector, she has successfully delivered many high-impact projects in the development sector, which focussed on reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity rates. She is currently a registered senior midwife in the UK.

We are excited to have attracted a candidate with Judith's calibre to the role, and welcome her to the BMF family.

DONATIONS

During the year ended 30 June, 2017, donations received totalled \$1,178,368 (2016 - \$1,106,245). In addition we have received significant in-kind contributions and services. These include the work of doctors, midwives, and administrators who volunteer to help run the hospitals, train local staff or supervise building operations. Other non-monetary contributions include the donation of equipment for hospitals, especially the new hospital in Barhir Dah. We are grateful to Sonic Healthcare who organised the transport of a large container to transport all the equipment for the fit-out of the Vision Maternity Care Hospital. Many of the contents of this container were donated. We are grateful to Garry Turland and Brad Baker for their many visits to Barhir Dar. The contribution of these two volunteers was vital to the successful completion of the hospital.

DIRECTORS

Many thanks to our directors; Founders Dr David Browning and Bishop George Browning, Katrina Onishi, Dr Samantha Hargreaves, Maryanne Ayres, Louise Harknett and Tom Crawford. It has not been an easy year with much building activity and new activities in Arusha. Our Treasurer Katrina Onishi is retiring at our Annual General Meeting in October. We are grateful to Katrina who has streamlined the reporting procedures during her term of office. Tom Crawford, of PricewaterhouseCoopers, has kindly consented to be Treasurer.

Finally thanks to our General Manager, Jo Crowley, for her efforts during the year and for undertaking her first visit to Africa.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank-you to our donors for your faithful support. Special mention must go to the Planet Wheeler Foundation, the Morris Family Foundation, the DAK Foundation and the Sydney and South West Sydney Local Health Districts for their substantial contributions. These organisations retain a close interest in the progress of Andrew and Valerie's projects and visit them in Africa to see first-hand the outcomes that are being realised. This is important as engaged donors become like partners, and together we can work towards greater success.

But large or small, we are sincerely grateful for every bit of help. We have limited reserves and we are dependent on continued giving. We are achieving so much with so little. There are so many opportunities to do wonderful things for the poorest women on earth. You are helping us expand our support of the organisations led so ably by Valerie and Andrew, who themselves perform such untiring and sacrificial work. They know the culture and needs of the people of Africa and are widely respected.

Thank-you to the staff of the organisations we support in Africa. It is wonderful that Birhanu Menber who administered the hospital in Barhir Dah for many years has now qualified as a doctor and will work in that capacity at the new hospital next year.

Thank you to the volunteers and to the DAK Foundation which finances all costs associated with volunteers. The hospitals we support provide their services at incredibly low costs with outstanding outcomes. Thank you to all who contribute to give great benefits at no cost to the poor women of Africa.

To God be the glory



Michael Sharpe AO
Chairman

PO Box 2371 Bowral NSW www.barbaramayfoundation.com ABN 35 141 248 900
General Manager – Joanne Crowley – 0412 446 969

