



## Smiles Update - Autumn 2020

### Important Message from the Chair

These are difficult and challenging times with Covid-19 impacting us all. As I write the reported cases of virus infections across Bangladesh are just 22 - significantly less than might be expected!

We have no clear idea of how this might change and unfold in coming days, and how it will affect our free Cleft surgical program in the weeks ahead! What we do know though, is that on average 14 children in Bangladesh will continue to be born every day, inflicted with a serious cleft lip/palate disability.

In these changing and challenging times for each one of us, we remind ourselves that with you, our generous partners and Rotary friends, we have, since 2005, enabled Operation Cleft to successfully undertake more than 13,000 life-changing surgeries. These surgeries are nothing short of a miracle in the eyes of the family and children impacted. This year, since July 1st, together with our program Partner DCKH we have completed in just 8 months 1,116 surgeries.

Every surgery is so deeply appreciated by the family and extended family involved. These families are very poor and doing it tough. There is no way they could afford to pay for such a complex operation. Without surgery babies will so often suffer serious malnutrition, affecting their immune system, resulting in ear, nose and throat infections. Along with this comes the social rejection and depression experienced. Hence what you and we are doing is so life changing and appreciated.

Despite the impending virus issues, it is imperative that we continue through these unknown and uncertain times to provide hope and a future for these Cleft suffering children and their families.

Thanks for your continued donations, support and partnership particularly through this present very difficult tough period. Together we are making a difference by gifting a child with a smile for life.

Enjoy the latest stories and information in this Autumn Newsletter.

Thank you,

Bruce McEwen  
Chair.

## **Ron's smile and future will be brighter**



Most of the time, children like Roni; who is eight years old miss out on receiving the life changing surgery. He has suffered ear and throat infections all his life.

When all boys and girls his age play together and go to school, Roni would miss out on many simple childhood activities. Scared of being bullied and laughed at, Roni's parents decided not to send him to the village school. The dad said that 'Roni is a very bright boy and sometimes even a bit naughty. He loves to play Cricket '.

We met Roni during a cleft camp in Chittagong where we could see how much he enjoyed meeting other children and to play with them. Roni has four brothers. Sadly, his eldest brother was also born with cleft and further, he is deaf and dumb. The income of Roni's father who works as a daily labourer hardly covers their living costs. For his family, it is a huge burden to take care of the children and to pay the medical expenses.

The good news is that with generous people like you in our country, Roni can have a normal childhood thanks to the life changing corrective surgery. It will not only change his appearance but will also give him access to education and his future choices would be limitless. His parents told us, that he is so excited about the prospect of going to school in the near future!

## **Generous support received from Abbott Australia**



A very kind staff member from Abbott Australia; Jacqui Hodgkinson convinced her colleagues and work to choose OCA as the chosen charity to support and fundraise for during their Melbourne Cup weekend gathering.

The generous bunch at Abbott Australia raised over \$15,000 to provide free cleft operations to poor children in Bangladesh!

We would like to express our gratitude to all who supported!

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**Donate a Smile today!**

## Thanks to our Media Supporters

We were fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to share our OCA story with The Senior newspaper in November last year and The Leader (City of Whitehorse) early February this year.

Please click below for the stories on the publisher's websites.

[The Senior Newspaper.](#)

[The Leader Newspaper.](#)



# Whitehorse Leader

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020 WHITEHORSELEADER.COM.AU

The image shows the front page of the Whitehorse Leader newspaper. The main headline is 'Driven to help' in large, bold, white letters. Below it, a sub-headline reads 'Anthony Mallamace suffers from Crohn's disease and is a full time carer for his dad but still finds the time to give patients a free ride to appointments at Epworth Eastern hospital. REPORT PAGE 10'. The main photo shows two men standing in front of an Epworth Eastern hospital entrance. To the left, there are four smaller article teasers: 'REASON TO SMILE PAGE 7', 'BEST FRIENDS PAGE 9', 'MOOMBA LONG WEEKEND WHAT'S ON, PAGE 22', and 'BESPOKE LUXURY REAL ESTATE, PAGE 23'. The newspaper's logo and name are visible at the top.

## Program gives special gift

Bruce McEwen and the team at Operation Cleft Australia (OCA) are giving children across Bangladesh the gift of a smile for life.

The Box Hill man started OCA in 2005 with the help of fellow members of the Box Hill Rotary Club.

In the 15 years since, they've helped fund almost 14,000 operations on babies with cleft palates and cleft lips.

Operation Cleft Australia provides free cleft repair surgery for underprivileged children who would otherwise fall through the cracks of Bangladesh's overburdened public health system.

Thousands grow to adulthood with the condition untreated and, because of the way they look, are ostracised by society. Many suffer from ear, nose and throat infections as well as depression and malnutrition.



Bruce McEwen with a baby helped by Operation Cleft.

**Donate a Smile today!**

**All donations no matter how small will help us towards our target of 1,500 cleft operations a year! We thank you in advance for your generosity!**

**You can donate online or send a donation directly to our bank account**

The Account Name: Operation Cleft Australia Inc.

Bendigo Bank

BSB 633 000 Account Number 165 147 935

(Please add your name as the reference and e-mail your name and address to [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au) so that we can provide you with a tax receipt.)

**Operation Cleft Australia**

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