



2019 Impact Report

Overview

In 2019, the focus for Hands Across the Water remained on providing a high level of care and opportunities for the community that we support in Thailand, with an ongoing commitment to the prudent and most effective use of funds that were raised by our great supporters. Our attention was not limited to the current level of care but also on creating a life of choice for the community that we support and exploring new opportunities to reduce the reliance upon donations.

Since its inception in 2005, Hands Across the Water has ensured that 100% of all donations raised goes to the communities that we support in Thailand without the use of any donor's funds in the administration or fundraising activities of the charity here in Australia. We are able to make this commitment due to the establishment in 2011, of a social enterprise Hands Group, that sits next to the charity and undertakes its own commercial activities to generate income. It is Hands Group that is the entity that employs the Australian based team who undertake the activities that underwrite the operation of the charity.





Use of Donors Funds

Hands Across the Water currently supports the operations of seven projects in Thailand. Originating in the southern area of Khao Lak, expansion has seen the reach of the charity to all points of the compass leading us into provinces located across Thailand. We work in conjunction with local partners in the provision of care. The funds to operate the projects are determined based upon the prior twelve month operating budget. We work with the Directors of each of the facilities in an annual budget review to understand variances to the forthcoming year. Once a budget has been set payments are made on a monthly basis with contingencies for out of budget expenditures. The annual budget review and monthly payment process allows a higher level of transparency over the use of the funds and a stronger level of compliance and governance.

The funds are used to provide a standard of care that we are not only extremely proud of but allows the children who are with us personal growth and dignity with individual development plans in place for those children.

The financial accounts disclose the funds raised during the last reporting period and how those funds were used. All of the financial accounts in Thailand are subjected to an external financial audit and the subject that review is submitted to the Thai Government. In Australia the financial accounts of the charity are also subjected to an external audit the results of which are forwarded to the ACNC.

How we measure ourselves

As a charity that is focused on building strong communities, our goal is not and never has been to grow the number of residential facilities that we operate. We firmly believe that the best place for children, when all things are equal, is within a traditional or close to, family unit. We are proud of the level of care and the standard of our facilities but we much prefer to see children living with families than within our homes.

Our true measure of our success would be to cease operations because there is no need for the services we provide. In all that we do, we are in fact working to shut ourselves down by building strong resilient community members who live a life of choice. If we are able to achieve that, those who leave our homes will be able to provide for their subsequent children and in some small way reduce the need, at least for that individual, for the support we offer.

Whilst the long term lofty goal might be to reduce the need for our residential facilities for children in need, we have some shorter goals that are within reach.

We know we are being successful when the children we have supported, be that for a short or long term are able to leave our facility, either returning to the family, whatever the constitution of that might be, or leave after graduation from school and as a direct result of the support they have received can live a life of choice not chance. This might mean the children are funded through University, skills based training or we have leveraged our contacts and network to secure them employment opportunities they might not have had otherwise.





How we raised our money in 2019

At Hands Across the Water our income generation comes in a small number, but effective fundraising activities.

Each January we lead a committed group of supporters, predominately from Australia, to Thailand to participate in a charity bike ride. They fundraise a minimum amount which might be between \$5000 and \$10,000. On top of that they pay for their own travel expenses which are not covered by donors funds. They cannot fundraise to cover their personal travel costs.

The rides are open to the public to join and are then complimented by a number of private or what we call “corporate rides” that also occur throughout the year. These fundraising rides will generate approximately two thirds of the annual budget that we seek to raise. In addition to the rides we have a sponsorship program, and also undertake an annual gala dinner amongst other events.

Hands Group, the social enterprise side undertakes its income generation mainly through the very successful Future of Leadership series. This funds the team at Hands Group who effectively run not only Hands Group but the fundraising activities of the charity.

Reducing the Reliance on Donations

As we increase the opportunities for the communities and children we support via initiatives such as the University Scholarship Program, English Language Program and the like our costs continue to increase. As we seek to provide greater opportunities and increased diversity in their learning the costs of doing so increase. To assist in reducing the reliance on donors to support these initiatives we implement sometimes albeit modest, activities that generate funds locally. In each of the homes we have provided training and resourcing that enables the homes to generate income through sustainable agricultural activities. Through these activities not only are they supplementing income, but reducing expenditure by the adoption of these sustainable practices. Currently they are modest contributions and that contribution will grow in time, but importantly there is certainly a level of self responsibility for the needs at each of the homes we support.



Impact on Fundraising in 2019 and beyond

Since 2012 it has felt that we have been swimming against the tide in relation to the impact that we have experienced with the fall of the Australian dollar against the Thai Baht. Initially the impact was hardly felt and there was a degree of confidence that it would be limited. However, it is with a retrospective view that the impact has been truly noted. In 2012, the exchange rate for \$1 AUD was 32 TBH. Now it is \$1 AUD and 20 TBH. This impact has been felt incredibly hard across all areas of our operations. Each year we are needing to raise up to 20% more just to remain at the same place we were the year prior. As a Board, the impact of the currency movement has been dealt with in all practical ways which has included moving funds into Thai currency to avoid the further impact. However this strategy delays the impact as we are only able to move the funds we have at the time.

The impact of the falling Australian dollar not only means what we use to raise buys us less on the ground, but it also means travelling to and through Thailand has become much more expensive than it used to be. This is felt by our riders who see, not insignificant price increases and on occasions these price increases may be the determining factor on whether someone undertakes an offshore experience with us or not.

The backend of 2019 saw the devastating bushfires within Australia which made the fundraising for our riders who would participate in one of our Thailand rides that much more difficult. The charity sector is an incredibly competitive space at the best of times, so when the public gives so much to an event such as the bushfires of 2019/2020, the coffers of many are empty when it comes to supporting off shore causes.

2020 and Beyond

Leading into 2020 we were filled with optimism at the opportunities before us, even with the impact of the bushfires that created such devastation within Australia. We believed that 2020 offered enhanced opportunities through education, skill development and partnerships. Through innovation, creativity and an unrelenting resolve we envisage a future for the communities that we support that is bright, filled with hope and opportunities. The vision has not gone away, but due to Covid 19, it has been temporarily placed on hold. Our focus in light of Covid 19 and the implications that has on fundraising means that we can continue to develop pathways for the future, but capital investment in such projects will be put on hold as we ride this current crisis out.





www.handsacrosstthewater.org.au
team@handsacrosstthewater.org.au
ABN 40 124 112 983