



Operation Cleft Australia is an international project of the Rotary Club of Box Hill Central Inc. District 9810 Australia



Operation Cleft Australia Foundation Inc.
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www.operationcleft.org.au

Winter Newsletter 2019

Be a Smile Donor!

Make your tax-deductable donation
before June 30th!



Message from Chair

Thank you for your continuing interest and generous support for the Operation Cleft program. Because of your giving we are now into our 14th year of a program that has seen 12,000 children receive free life changing surgery. Without you, our valued individual donors and our many committed and supportive Rotary Clubs, the program would not continue. We are proud of being a local Australian Rotary Club initiated and managed NFP organisation.

I notice that many project directors use the word 'impact' to emphasize the value of their projects. I'm sure you would agree that there are few programs that can match the life-changing 'impact' flowing from the Operation Cleft project. During my visit to Bangladesh last year I will forever remember the smiles on the faces of the mothers and fathers on seeing their child for the first-time following surgery. But not just the smiles but the way they so tightly held their child; overwhelmed at the transformation, hope, and future that now promises for their child, but also for them as a couple and a family.

Like you, I am always moved by the amazing 'before and after' photographs of smiling appreciative girls and boys, even at such a young age, who are now so pleased with their new face as a result of the surgery.

Impact like being able to eat normally, be much less afflicted with life-threatening infections, improved speech now possible, to be able to play and socialize with their friends as normal, to feel accepted and most important to be able to attend and succeed at school.

All possible because of the free surgery provided by Operation Cleft. But we know that the success of this program is also only possible because of the giving attitude of our committed, professional, highly skilled and experienced surgeons. Our much appreciated Good-Will Ambassador in Bangladesh Moinul Islam, in early March, organised a 2nd meeting of our Surgeons for this 18/19 year. Together with our program partner DCKH and SNAD (our NGO in Bangladesh), the purpose was to review, plan and implement the exciting new program and reporting processes for the year ahead (see attached article for more detail). I appreciated the opportunity to be involved as a Skype partner in this important meeting.

On behalf of the Operation Cleft Australia Foundation Board I again, from the bottom of my heart want to thank you, our supporters and our District OCA Ambassadors who so faithfully represent us around Australia. Your partnership and support of Operation Cleft is deeply appreciated.

Hope you enjoy reading our Winter (pre-tax) newsletter.



Chair, Bruce McEwen

2ND MEETING OF CLEFT BANGLADESH SURGEONS

Important Surgeon's Dhaka Meeting Report

The second meeting for the 18/19 year of our OCA/DCKH, (Cleft Bangladesh) surgeons was held on 1st March 2019 in Dhaka. The meeting focused on newly developed tools for our Cleft Bangladesh online patient database, the Cleft Bangladesh Website and issues relevant to project implementation.

During the meeting, OCA Goodwill Ambassador Moinul Islam led the session on the implementation of the important Cleft Bangladesh on-line Story Module. During his presentation, surgeons logged into their own accounts and were able to gain hands-on experience of this important module.

Newly appointed Country Manager of Cleft Bangladesh Mr Sofowan Bakee introduced himself and shared his plan for the project implementation for the months ahead.

Ms Maike Herrmann, Executive Assistant to CEO, DCKH was present in the meeting and she discussed the Cleft Bangladesh website development and relevant issues related to the database management.

OCA Chair, Mr Bruce McEwen together with DCKH's CEO Alexander Gross, Intl. Programmes Advisor, Dr Dushyant R Prasad along with other DCKH staffs joined the meeting via Skype. The Bangladeshi NGO, SNADF responsible for the Cleft Bangladesh program was represented by Executive Director, Mr Arsalan Zaman. The surgeons were thanked for their remarkable contribution to the on-going Cleft Bangladesh program.

Via Skype Bruce thanked the surgeons for their sincere efforts for this wonderful program in bringing smiles to the congenital cleft lip-palate patients of Bangladesh.



Moinul Islam's reflection as the Goodwill Ambassador of Operation Cleft



To serve as Operation Cleft Goodwill Ambassador is truly humbling. The opportunity to make a real difference is not a prospect that everyone is given, one I have accepted from the core of my heart. My involvement with OCA began almost six years ago. Today, I stand here humbled, encouraged and committed, because of it.

Along this journey with OCAF I have been on many field trips to villages and cities across Bangladesh. On these trips, I spent time with numerous young cleft children and their families and have experienced firsthand transformation, not just of their faces but also of their lives. I see many children and their parents, especially mothers living in remote areas of Bangladesh, who face a lot of

challenges after giving birth to a congenital cleft child. When a baby is born with a cleft, the mother is so often blamed as being cursed or for having done something wrong while pregnant to cause her baby's deformity. Surgery is very expensive therefore it's not an option for poor families. Most parents are unaware that the deformity is even treatable! Most of these unfortunate children live their lives in shame, they are unable to eat, talk or go to school. Many children born with cleft lip and/or palate conditions are abandoned by their parents at birth.

As the OCA Goodwill Ambassador, I represent OCA at many of the surgical camps held across Bangladesh. Last week I attended a Surgical camp in Bogra, a city north of Dhaka. In that surgical camp I met Ayan, one of the thirty children who had presented for surgery. Ayan is a 3-month, 25-day old boy born with a congenital cleft lip.

Even though his mother Morjina was devastated and scared at his birth, they as a couple gradually embraced the challenges. Now they are proud of their son as if he had been born without a birth defect. They believe God had given Ayan to them for a reason. Ayan has now received surgery by Operation Cleft (Cleft Bangladesh) and the outcome appears to be excellent. We will include an updated photo and story of him in a future OCA newsletter.

The smile of this family is our inspiration to 'gift a smile for life'.

Moinul Islam, OCA Goodwill Ambassador.

Operation Cleft—Melbourne Fundraiser

This is not to be missed!

Your invitation to a unique one-man-drama NEWK (The John Newcombe Story) based on the life of the famous Australian Tennis star John Newcombe.

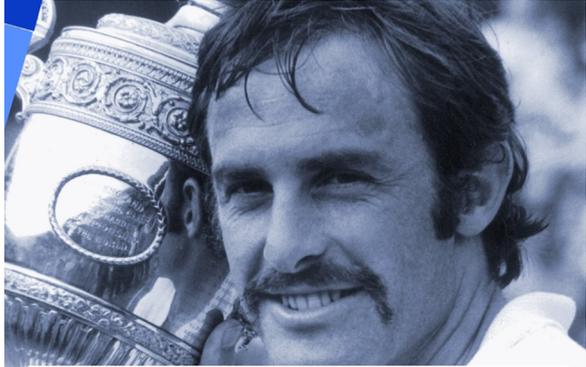
The play was released earlier this year, written by Kieran Carrol, a renowned Melbourne playwright. See the flyer attached for booking.

Welcome to new In-country Manager

We are pleased to welcome Abu Safowan Bakee (Bakee) as our newly appointed OCA/DCKH (Cleft Bangladesh) In-country manager. Bakee will be responsible for looking after all the Bangladesh in-country aspects of the program and will be supported by our OCA Good-Will Ambassador Moinul during these early months.



Moorabbin Rotary presents
NEWK (THE JOHN NEWCOMBE STORY)
A fundraiser for children born with cleft lips and palates



Written by : Kieran Carroll (Sons of Sun, The Truth is Longer Than a Lie)
Performed by : Damian Callinan (Writer and Star of The Merger)

WHEN?
Sunday 21st July from 4pm
Showtime - 4.45pm

WHERE?
Hampton Community Centre
14 Willis St Hampton

Tickets:
<https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=497208&>
or available at door on day if not sold out.

Telephone Enquiries :
(03) 97761187

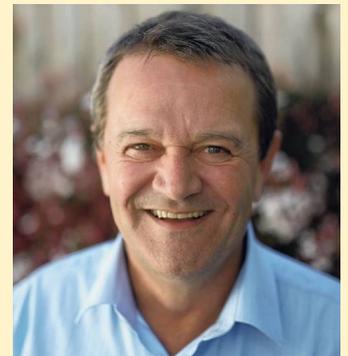
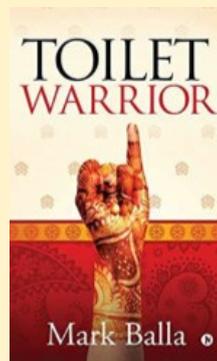
Operation Cleft is life saving and gives a child a smile for life.

OCA featured in the book 'Toilet Warrior'

'How deep the Impact!'

Mark Balla, a member of the Rotary Club of Box Hill Central reflects below on an Operation Cleft surgical clinic he attended in the City of Netrokona, Bangladesh en-route while visiting another of the club's sanitation and hygiene projects in India. (this is an extract from Mark Balla's Book 'Toilet Warrior', Notion Press, 2019, also available on Kindle).

'The highlight of this visit to Bangladesh was meeting some of the children and their families. I had never seen a cleft lip close up. I realised after the visit that most of the photos we see of this condition are of clefts that are not too bad. Some of the children we saw on that day were in truly terrible condition, quite astonishing that they were able to eat and drink. One boy that we met was fifteen years old, his cleft so large that most of his teeth were on the outside of his mouth. Very confronting, incredibly distressing and beyond imagination that he had gone so many years in this state. It was also unbelievably exciting to think that my little club in Melbourne was about to change this boy's life. Headed for cleft lip surgery We also met a little girl of ten or eleven who had already had surgery a couple of years earlier and was returning for a checkup. She was wearing a dress, had a ribbon in her hair, jewelry around her neck and was wearing lipstick. I told her and her mother that she looked so pretty. Her mother started to cry, bending down as if to touch my feet but I took her arms and told her there was no need. She knew that I was from the Rotary club in Australia that had funded her little girl's surgery. She and her daughter spoke for a moment, then the mother spoke to my interpreter who said: "The daughter wants to give you a hug." Three years after cleft lip surgery I smiled and bent down, and she ran over to me and threw her arms around my neck. It took all my strength not to start sobbing out loud. It was without a doubt my single greatest moment in Rotary'. You can purchase the book at www.toiletwarrior.net.



A big thank you and a welcome to McKinnon Secondary College, Victoria for joining the OCA community as a Smile Donor by organising their first ever Spelling Bee to raise funds to provide free corrective surgeries to disadvantaged children who are born with cleft lips and/or palates in Bangladesh!

**Please make your tax-deductable donation before June 30th 2019
to Gift a Smile for Life!**

Upcoming Camp Dates

Lions Hospital, Chittagong

- April 28.
- May 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th.
- June 4th, 11th and 18th.

Liberty Hospital, Mymensingh

- May 17th.

Images from the recent 2019 Camps



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 send a donation directly to our bank account or complete and send the following form in the enclosed reply envelope.

The Account Name: Operation Cleft Australia Inc.
Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000 Account Number 165 147 935

IMPORTANT Please add your name as reference and e-mail your name and address to info@operationcleft.org.au so that we can provide you with a tax receipt.



**I wish to be a
Smile Donor**

An international humanitarian project of the
 Rotary Club of the Box Hill Central Inc
 District 9810 Australia



Donate safely online at www.operationcleft.org.au

OR complete the following and post it to **Operation Cleft Australia, PO Box 631, Box Hill VIC 3128**

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible

I wish to donate by Cheque
 Credit Card Please debit my Visa MasterCard

For a one off donation of \$_____ OR monthly payment of \$_____ which I can cancel at any time

Card Number Expiry Date /

Donor's Name(s).....|.....

Address.....State.....POSTCODE.....

Email..... Contact Number.....Signature.....

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 Operation Cleft Australia is a Public Ancillary Fund with DGR status. Deductions of \$2 or more are tax-deductible in Australia.