From the Chairperson

WELCOME MESSAGE

I am very proud that our team was the first on the scene to save two drowned children at the hospital’s emergency ward. The team’s professionalism was praised and acknowledged.

Kratie province remained a challenge for the team in 2015. Learning from the previous year, a lot of safety measures were put in place to minimise the team’s well-being. However, the constant electrical failures interrupted all aspects of our service and damaged some of our equipment.

Despite the challenges, the team did an exceptional job under difficult circumstances. We thank the 3,000 patients for their patience and understanding when having to wait longer for service. Thank you to the local authorities and Kratie Referral Hospital staff for doing all they could to assist.

It was wonderful for us to have surprise visits from our previous patients. Our favourite 100-year-old woman whom we assisted in 2014 with one cataract, returned to seek assistance for her other eye. She turned 101 and is still going strong.

The post-C section patient whom Marie assisted brought her one-year-old boy to visit and thanked Marie. The boy and mum were strong and healthy.

Leakheana’s parents also brought her back to see Dr Tung Bui and Dr Peter Wong who saved her from an emergency spleenectomy. She continues with her medication.

In November 2015, our South Australia team was born. We held the first fundraising function in Adelaide with great success. I thank the whole team and the community in Adelaide for the support.

I am grateful to all of our continued and committed sponsors and donors. I especially thank the entire team at 2CR China Radio – Loving World program for their fundraising effort for the second year.

Please contact us if you can assist in any way. Let us know if you are interested in having a donation tin in your office/shop/surgery. Let us know if you would like to volunteer with us. We encourage the younger generation to get involved in charity work and make new friends. It is fun and rewarding.

Chhek Ming Ly
Chairperson

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED IN THE 2015 MISSION?

1. The Optometry team consulted/assessed over 2,715 men, women and children who came from all over the country.
2. The optical team provided - 344 prescription optical glasses (glasses were made and picked up on the day) - 802 readymade reading glasses - 1,054 sunglasses
3. The General Practice team treated 710 patients with various illnesses
4. The hearing aids team provided over 500 hearing aids to the deaf
5. The surgical team performed 378 surgeries for cataract and pterygia
6. The team donated boxes of children’s toys to the children of Kratie and to Sihanouk Hospital Centre of Hope
7. 1,000 4.5kg bags of new rice was donated to post-op patients; hospital patients in the maternity, children’s, TB and general wards as well as the hospital
8. Three patients with retina detachment were sent to Phnom Penh for further investigation and treatment
9. Donated 10 hospital beds to Kratie Referral Hospital & Sihanouk Hospital Centre of Hope
10. Boxes of facial tissues, wet tissues & toilet tissues were donated to both Kratie Referral Hospital & Sihanouk Hospital Centre of Hope
11. Donated a large amount of general medication to Kratie Referral Hospital
12. Donated a lot of safety measures since the start of the project. Frequent electrical failures caused much interruption to all areas of our work. Nevertheless, a fantastic outcome was achieved. Here is a snapshot of the outcome from the mission from September 2015:
13. Donated a large amount of general medication to Phnom Penh
14. Built two western style toilets
15. Donated a large amount of general medication to Kratie Referral Hospital
16. Donated clothing and children’s books to the children of Kratie
17. The team also helped treat/save a few non-eye hospital patients including - a young man burned in a motor cycle accident - an 18-year-old woman severely burnt by an epileptic seizure and fell into open fire
18. A young child resuscitated after drowning
19. Assisted a cancer patient with treatment

I am sure you agree that this is an outstanding effort performed by the whole team in a week.

It was also wonderful to see previous patients assisted by the team returning to visit and thank the team. This is our greatest satisfaction!
Melanie's Story

IT’S NO HOLIDAY IN CAMBODIA


I COULDN’T IMAGINE YOU’D ever see it in Australia... a surgeon calmly performing eye surgery next to another doing a caesarean section. The conditions in Cambodia are Spartan with surgeons working in dimly lit tiled rooms, darkened to minimise the heat and humidity. These are the conditions the Cambodia Vision team worked with, as I found out for myself when I accompanied the 75 volunteers to Kratie Province, in the country’s north.

The province of Kratie, on the banks of the mighty Mekong River, to the north of Cambodia, is home to more than 300,000 people, many of them surviving on just a dollar a day. On one week in October, 3,000 of those people visited the local hospital, some travelling for five hours or more by bus, bike and foot, for free eye checks, surgery, glasses and hearing aids, all courtesy of Cambodia Vision, its sponsors and a team of dedicated volunteers.

Kratie Referral Hospital is an overwhelming place to wander around. The health system, of course, is nothing like what I’m used to in Australia. As one person explained, the doctors do the medicine, the nurses make sure things are running smoothly and the families take care of the patients, fanning them through the long sweltering days and nights, holding IV medicine and saline bags high, washing and feeding them throughout their stay.

Standards of hygiene are low with hospital rubbish piling high on dusty grounds that turn to mud in an afternoon’s belting rain. The odours are suffocating. The hospital’s one ophthalmologist, Dr. Sokhan Heng, explained to me that frequent changes to funding for medical procedures meant that sometimes eye surgery is affordable for the poorer people in the community and other times not. Right now, at $55 per cataract, it’s the latter, which means Dr. Heng and the Cambodian people are heavily reliant on the support of NGOs like Cambodia Vision.

Interestingly, Dr. Heng said Cambodia Vision’s visit to Kratie Province last year had helped by both providing free eye care services available at the hospital. This, in turn, had brought more patients in to see him during the year. On an average month, he now performs about 40–50 cataract surgeries and sees 150–170 patients in the outpatient department.

Providing cataract surgery is just part of the job for Cambodia Vision. The group, which consists entirely of volunteers who pay their own way – from airfares and accommodation through to meals and insurances – has become a well-oiled machine over seven years of operation.

A small contingent always travels ahead of the main team to prepare for the clinics; thoroughly scrubbing down wards vacated by the hospital and setting up equipment. Once the main team arrives there are just a few hours remaining before hundreds of patients descend on the hospital grounds to have their vision and hearing restored. It’s the same every year, such is the need, and the demand for sight.

Rooms allocated by the hospital are organised into stations so patients can flow through registration on to eye checks, testing and then the dispensary. Patients who require surgery are seen by the GP before being moved across to the anaesthetics rooms, which as you’d expect, flows on to the surgery. Unless they are from the local area, patients sleep over at the hospital on mats supplied by Cambodia Vision, and the following morning have their eye patches removed, their eyes checked and medications explained. Each patient is given a post-op kit, complete with medications. This year, thanks to a new sponsor, they were also given a bag of rice.

Cataract patients who have to travel far to get home also receive US$5 to pay for the journey. During their stay, lunch and dinner vouchers ensure no-one – neither patient or family member – goes hungry.

Finding Ways to Work

This year, like all years before, the Province’s inconsistent power supply caused havoc. Even before the clinic opened, during the set-up process, a sterilising unit blew up due to the erratic supply. Surgery too, was delayed on day one, with regular power outages shutting down the equipment. “It’s impossible to operate with the power going on and off,” explained Dr. David Ng. “If the power is out, the microscope won’t work – if you have an instrument in the eye at the time, you can’t see if it’s safe to remove it.”

Fortunately, Cambodia Vision has an electrician on board. For the first few days, Campbell McKellar is on the run, moving from one electrical problem to another. When he’s not fixing power, he is in the dispensary grinding lenses, a skill he has picked up by since joining the group. “The hospital doesn’t have anyone qualified to work on it, so they often ask me to fix problems that have been happening for months. I found one doctor randomly pulling wires from the source, trying to work out how to get things working.”

Having got the steriliser up and running, Campbell turned his attention to the main power...
supply. “Thinda Yang (Cambodia Vision official) puts calls out to senior ministers to stabilise the power, and in the meantime, I appointed someone to sit under the mains box. They were instructed to flick the switch every time it tripped,” he said. “It’s make-shift, but it worked.”

Making Progress
Despite these delays, on the first day of Cambodia Vision’s clinic, 33 patients were operated on, 70 hearing aids were fitted and 33 patients were operated on, day of Cambodia Vision’s clinic, despite these delays, on the first day of Cambodia Vision’s clinic, 33 patients were operated on, 70 hearing aids were fitted and 33 patients were operated on.

In post-op on day two, the first 33 patients sat quietly in a circle on the floor waiting to have their eye patches removed and their eyes checked. Most looked stunned by their new vision, still cloudy from the operation. A few needed to be fitted with hearing aids before they could receive instructions about taking care of their eyes during the healing process.

Dr. Chris Brown, who has been part of the Cambodia Vision team since it was established in 2007, said the first surgeries had gone well. “I’ve been to many places many times and always the first day is a bit problematic. Yesterday was more problematic than most with the power shortages but overall things were very good. I’ve seen the patients today and most of them are very happy… overall I’m satisfied with the first day. This is a very small group compared to what we usually see – today we will see around 70 patients.”

 Asked what he gets out of his trips with Cambodia Vision, Dr. Brown said, “I’m addicted to it, it’s really satisfying, it’s lovely and it’s always a big contrast to Australia where it’s still a great operation but people don’t have the visual problems they have here. So it’s great to know that people who may slowly go totally blind are being visually rehabilitated.”

Dr. Audrey Murugesan was also part of the founding team. She said the first Cambodia Vision team was very small and focused on pterygiums, a surgery that she continues to provide to the people of Cambodia while her new environment, working cataract surgeries. “It is time consuming surgery but I don’t mind doing it, I’m here to help. There is a much greater prevalence of pterygium here than in Australia, I think because the people spend all of their time outside in the sun from childhood; the dust and dirt might also have something to do with it.”

For the first time in her career, Dr. Murugesan removed a pterygium in a surgery alongside a Cambodian doctor who was delivering a baby by caesarean. “I felt pretty uncomfortable about doing it but the doctor was very calm, and the baby boy was born within 10 minutes. I tried to give him the space he needed but I couldn’t help but look up when the baby was born!”

The young mother was wheeled into the anaesthetics room where eight patients lay waiting for their eye patches removed after cataract surgery. Her baby was handed to the father who carried his little boy out into the bright sun to be introduced to the extended family. Another baby was born by caesarean in the same surgery later that day.

Dr. Murugesan said the opportunity to be part of Cambodia Vision from the beginning was incredibly rewarding.

“You see these people and they are so poor, and they do so well and they see so well after surgery and it just makes you feel so good. Sometimes I think we get more out of it than they do, you want to change the world and make it a better place and this is just a small step. Everyone has something to offer – if we all gave just 5 per cent whether that’s our time, our talent or our money, the world would be a better place. Giving – you just can’t put a value on that.”

The sentiment was the same, no matter who I spoke to from the team. Back in the optometry area, Vision Eye Institute practice manager Philip Lu was assigned to A-scans for cataract patients. This was his first trip as a volunteer. “Day one was pretty intense. The line of patients just kept building and I was really aware that they were all there waiting for me.” By day two, that line had become the norm for Philip, who methodically and gently worked his way through each patient, part of a process to ensure the very best vision can be achieved for these people who have so little.

Similarly, optometrist Marlene Xiao who was on her first trip to Cambodia, said she was feeling a little nervous. “I’m used to being in my own room, knowing where everything is. Once we get going [with screening] I think I will be alright. But there is the added pressure of knowing there is a line of people waiting.” By mid-way through day one, Ms. Xiao looked comfortable in her new environment, working with the help of a medical student to screen patients using an eye chart simplified for use with people who cannot read.

Optometrist Sue Ang quietly works her way through hundreds of people who have queued patiently for hours to have their eyes checked and vision tested. After four trips to Cambodia, she is well seasoned and instrumental to the patients’ smooth passage through eye testing and checks. “My job now is essentially logistics, making sure the team is working effectively, relieving staff, moving patients through the system. This is a steep learning curve for young optometrists – I’m careful to only bring along selected students who can help. After four trips to Cambodia, the system is a lot more out of it than they do, you want to change the world and make it a better place and this is just a small step. Everyone has something to offer – if we all gave just 5 per cent whether that’s our time, our talent or our money, the world would be a better place. Giving – you just can’t put a value on that.”

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AN ECLECTIC MIX

Husband and wife, Sheree and David Lamb share their experiences in Kratie

Why Cambodia vision?

David and I were drawn to working with Cambodia Vision because of its reputation for providing quality services to those who can least afford them; that it was a not for profit organisation, at it’s heart it was a deeply ethical and morally centred group committed to working to improve people’s lives regardless of background, religion, income, race or gender and; that it was made up of people who had a sense of collective responsibility to making a positive difference.

The Cambodia Vision team is an eclectic collection of individuals drawn from many different ages, cultural backgrounds and locations across Australia and the world. The success we saw was not measured by how many people visited us, how many operations we did, how much money we contributed to the local economy but more by the fact that we changed literally thousands of people’s lives forever.

The look on a person’s face as they see for the first time in years or hear a loved one’s voice is hard to explain but at that time, in that moment, that simple act can’t help but bring tears to both their eyes and the team’s….that is what Cambodia Vision is all about…. people helping people.

Sheree Lamb

GAPS AND INEQUITY IN

health and education have been major drivers in our lives especially within our indigenous population. Becoming a flight nurse with Air Ambulance has been, alongside midwifery, the best and most valuable nursing experience to date. I’m reminded of a Directors’ quote, ’They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care’.

Then we were lucky enough to experience Nepal and Cambodia. Like rural and remote Australia, Kratie Cambodia do the best they can with the resources they have at the time. All the health staff tried to assist the people as much as possible. A major lesson you quickly learn is the challenge of having the knowledge and skill level but not the required technology and infrastructure.

Maly and I gave first aid assistance, comfort and pain relief to a woman with a fractured arm who was pleading for help. Another teenager presented with third degree upper body burns and airway difficulty. A team approach tried to assist her suffering with positioning, pain relief, IV fluids, antibiotics and suggestions for possible transfer to a larger hospital.

Every day in our busy circles of control, we practice mindfulness, patience and empathy. In the bigger picture we are reminded of how lucky we are and how we all have the power to make changes for the better.

‘Luck is where preparation and opportunity meet’

Sheree Eaton/Lamb

SHEREE AND I WERE LUCKY enough to experience firsthand the simple mantra, “Giving the gift of sight,” as part of an eclectic mix of 65 people on the Cambodian Vision team on a trip to Kratie province Cambodia.

The team came from vastly different backgrounds with different levels of skills and professional capabilities but all with the one common goal to help as many people as we could and make a difference to the lives of people less fortunate than ourselves.

What an amazing team we were part of – passionate, respectful, caring, resourceful, energetic, enthusiastic and tireless – basically just a tremendous group to be around that have left us both with lasting positive memories of the work we did together, the experiences we shared and the life changing work we completed.

Of the trip itself we didn’t know what to expect but were welcomed in the team whole heartedly with respect and dignity. The organisation was professional, the accommodation and food terrific but such a contradiction to the the township we worked in.

The long hours in stifling heat we worked in come with the reward of witnessing life changed by the results of the services we provided. One cannot help but feel a sense of fulfilment when a part of these moments.

It’s humbling and a moment that still raises the hairs on my neck when I think about it and resonates deep to the core of what we all can contribute to people less fortunate than ourselves.

Thank you Cambodia Vision.

David Lamb

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

David Lamb has been in public education for over 30 years. He has worked at a number of primary schools in NSW and Queensland as a teacher and an assistant principal. David has been a principal at three schools as well as a principal education officer. Currently he is the Director Public Schools NSW for the Griffith Network.

Sheree Eaton/Lamb has been in nursing for over 30 years. She has worked in numerous areas of public and private health including intensive and emergency care, midwifery and senior health management. She has most recently worked for Air Ambulance NSW as a flight nurse.

They are UoW alumni, where they both graduated at master level and had guest lecture roles.
It was a true miracle that I could reunite with some of my family, and together, we attempted to flee Cambodia. It took four attempts to escape, each time a near disaster.

As a result, I was also invited to be a guest on the discussion panel at the Pharmacy Business Network 2015 in Canberra, as well as being named a Paul Harris Fellow, for my outstanding contribution to local and international charities.

This was also the year that we organised our first Cambodia Vision Annual Dinner. All money raised went towards Cambodia Vision, who treats the unfortunate in Cambodia with cataract and other vision problems. Each year, the event is attended by over 600 people, many of whom are respected members of society, as well as volunteers from Cambodia Vision.

We are particularly passionate about supporting Cambodia Vision, as the Cambodia Vision team work purely on a volunteer basis, which means that almost 100% of donations go towards the Cambodian people since expenses such as travelling and accommodation are paid by the volunteers.

Since arriving in Australia, it has always been my passion to serve the wider community. For example, I have established and developed a wide range of community groups such as, Cambodia Youth Association, which I was the founder of; Cambodia Orphanage Fund, which was presented to me by former Federal Senator, Mr. Tsebin Tchen, who is currently a Victorian Multicultural Commissioner. Again in 2014, I received a medal from the Cambodian Government for my contributions to the SCCFA School in Cambodia, and to education in general. I was also invited to be a guest speaker at the Cambodia Good Pharmacy Practice Conference in Cambodia, run by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) which is under the umbrella of the World Health Organisation (WHO), as well as being a member of the Advisory Board for Project Pharmacist at Monash University.

Besides establishing community groups, we also provide ongoing support and sponsorship of community organisations through donations, sponsorship, planning and attending cultural events etc.

We also organise our own fundraisers for charities: Cambodian Orphanage Fund, Cambodian Educational Network, Cambodia Vision and OIC.

Not only do we donate and sponsor local societies such as Save Cambodian Children Fund Australia (SCCFA), but also countless national and international charities, for example, Peter Mac Cancer Hospital; Victorian College of Pharmacy Foundation, Red Cross, Medicines Sans Frontiers and World Vision for international charities.

I was born in Pursat, Cambodia in 1956. While I was studying Pharmacy at the University of Phnom Penh, the communist dictator Pol Pot ruled the nation. For four years, the people of Cambodia and I endured unimaginable labour and torture, which killed my parents, some of my siblings, relatives as well as over 1.2 million people.

But it was a true miracle that I could reunite with some of my family, and together, we attempted to flee Cambodia. It took four attempts to escape, each time a near disaster.

Eventually, the remaining members of my family and myself made it to Khoao I Dang Refugee Camp in Thailand. There, I was fortunate to work with the Red Cross team, a Belgian and Scandinavian team. We were then placed in a transit camp, then known as Phanat Nikhom Refugee Camp where I worked as a substitute doctor with the Pharmacy Clinic. There, I was fortunate to work with the Red Cross team, a Belgian and Scandinavian team. We were then placed in a transit camp, then known as Phanat Nikhom Refugee Camp where I worked as a substitute doctor with the Pharmacy Clinic.

I then married my wife, Anh, in 1989. She was my classmate, who I had met on placement at Queen Victoria Hospital. Afterwards, I resigned to establish Lim’s Pharmacy with my wife in 1991.

During the first few years of my business, my two children were born - my daughter Joanne in 1995, and my son Albert in 1998.

Since then, our pharmacy has won a number of awards, such as the Australian Achiever Awards for three consecutive years (1999, 2000, and 2001). We have also been deeply passionate about serving our multicultural community. For example, we have staff who speak different languages, as well as health seminars in different languages in-store and at community groups.

I also received a medal for serving and contributing to the Springfield Ethnic Chinese Elderly Caring Friendship Association, which was presented to me by former Federal Senator, Mr. Tsebin Tchen, who is currently a Victorian Multicultural Commissioner.

In 2012, I was nominated for Australian of the Year. I have also received a nomination again for Australian of the Year in 2016.

In 2013, out of 5400 pharmacies across Australia, our pharmacy not only won the QCPP Community Engagement Award, but also overall winner of QCPP Pharmacy of the Year for Australia. These awards were presented at the APP Conference on the Gold Coast.

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In memory

TRISHA ROBERTSON

TRISHA ROBERTSON WAS a remarkable women. Teacher and nurse make a great combination; and she exploited her two degrees with patience and care, as a teacher at public schools in London in the late 90’s to 2009 and in Sydney from 2009 to 16. She took her pupils under her wing and ignited a learning passion within them, often turning lives around in the process. The sight saving work we carry out in Cambodia, has a ripple effect into the community. Trisha’s work in a tough school had a flow on to the families of the kids and the larger community. You might remember Trisha - she ran the silent auction at the Sydney Cambodia Vision function, but her biggest contribution was her being on the team for the Jog Out of Fog in 2014. This is where Trisha’s organisational and care skills came to the fore, and she made sure Damian had access to medical care at each stopping point on his 1000km jog. Trisha died as a result of a catastrophic brain bleed on the 23rd of April this year, leaving behind husband Paul, parents John and Mary, siblings Colleen, David and myself as well as a host of relatives and friends. I am glad to have had her as my sister and closest of friends.

William Robertson

First experience

ISABELLA CHUNG

My involvement with Cambodia Vision has been an incredibly humbling and rewarding experience and I was extremely excited to be taken on board. Personally, there was nothing greater than working side-by-side with amazing volunteers and health professionals such as optometrists, nurses, doctors, surgeons, who share the same goal and passion in helping people, who lack the most basic health care services, which we take for granted. As a 2nd generation Australian Cambodian; the Cambodia Vision program, not only appealed to me because of the opportunity to learn and get involved with medical work in general, but it allowed me to re-connect with my cultural roots by communicating and giving back to Cambodian people. During the first few days my cousin (Estherina) and I were working with the registration and administration team. Our roles included organising and recording patient demographic information, however with our terribly broken Khmer, it was challenging to communicate effectively. Luckily the translators were very helpful. After completing the administration and registration work, we were both given the opportunity to work in the surgical theatre, by assisting the ophthalmologists and nurses as scouts. The days and hours were long and exhausting, and sometimes challenging dealing with power and network outages, but I always woke up with a smile on my face knowing that I have been blessed with the opportunity to help people. It was a privilege to be working with Cambodia Vision and I know that the experience itself has given me more than I had to offer.
Cambodia Vision wishes to thank the volunteers who travelled to serve the people of Kratie province. We are most grateful for your time, energy and generosity to participate and make a difference:

Dr Smita Agawal  
Ms Eileen Betts  
Ms Kathryn Body  
Dr Chris Brown  
Dr Tung Bui  
Mr Kuong Chang  
Ms Kendra Chen  
Ms Elizabeth Chu  
Dr Dara Chung  
Ms Isabella Chung  
Mr David Dale  
Mr Allan Davis  
Ms Lyn Davis  
Ms Tracey Davis  
Mr Jamison Fahy  
Ms Kai Lyn Goh  
Ms Narelle Hillman  
Dr Nick Him  
Mr Hocku Huynh  
Ms Lisa Huynh  
Dr Tess Huynh  
Mrs Betty Katsogiannis  
Ms Melanie Kell

Dr Daniel Lai  
Mr Tim Lavelle  
Ms Melanie Li  
Ms Carneal Liu  
Mr Chek Ming Ly  
Ms Judy Ly  
Mr Ngann Ly  
Mr David Lamb  
Ms Sheree Lamb  
Mr Phillip Lu  
Ms Estherina Luong  
Ms Rita Luong  
Ms Siv Lang Ly  
Mr Les Luxford  
Mr Remi Luxford  
Mr Campbell McKellar  
Ms Barbara Moorely  
Mr Glenn Moorely  
Dr Audrey Murugesan  
Dr Michael Newman  
Dr David Ng  
Mr Mark Ngo  
Ms Susan Ang Ngo  
Ms Mally Nun  
Ms Mariene Xiao Qianhui  
Mr William Robertson  
Ms Chris Rose  
Dr Neil Rowe  
Mr James William Rudling  
Dr Giles Sampson  
Ms Lavy Sayumborn  
Dr Gary Schiller  
Ms Lois Scott  
Ms Jenny Smith  
Mr Chhong Heng Taing  
Dr Clement Tiong  
Ms Sanna Tormanen  
Mr Jonathan Tse  
Dr Michael Tse  
Dr Peter Wong  
Ms Thida Yang  
Ms Cathy Xu  
Mr Russell Zahn  
Ms Stella Zammit

Cambodia Vision would like to thank the following sponsors for their ongoing support:

Abbott  
Alcon  
OCLC  
Lim’s Pharmacy  
Murthai Food Company

Special thanks to interstate representatives:
Richard (Sour) Lim - Cambodia Vision representative of Victoria
Than Thong - Cambodia Vision representative of Victoria
Ken Lee - Cambodia Vision representative of Queensland
Sokhara (Tom) Say - Cambodia Vision representative of Queensland

And advisors:
Mr & Mrs Ngai
Mr Ly
Richard Lim
Murthai
Anthony Lee