



A MESSAGE FROM GEOFF AND LYNICE

There is a saying, “Time flies when you’re having fun”. So.... we must be having fun, as it is now four years since our Empower store opened in Bairnsdale on 15th August 2011. It seems such a short time ago that we were agonizing over what we should do to have the most impact in combatting the injustices caused by extreme poverty and a lack of value being attributed to women. Whilst we focus on the present and look to the future, it is also helpful to glance back at the past, to celebrate what has been achieved, to learn from our mistakes and to build on what has gone before.

There is a saying, “It’s not rocket science”. As we learned about the issues and visited different producer groups, it became apparent that one obvious need was to provide an appropriate market for the beautiful hand made products skilfully made by various artisans. Simply forming relationships with various producer groups and purchasing products from them at fair trade prices on an ongoing basis has been a great benefit to them. So often we have been told “This is just what we needed!” We are one piece in the puzzle, playing our part in the overall solution. It is often just a matter of seeing a need and working out our role to address it.

There is a saying, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”. Our focus has been on empowering producer groups rather than fostering a hand out

mentality. We only partner with groups who are actively doing something to help themselves. Funding vocational training is a priority for us, so that girls and women can learn skills which will be of practical benefit to them to help provide financial security and a sense of worth and dignity.

There is a saying, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. We are very mindful of, and grateful for, those who have been on the journey with us, supporting, encouraging and volunteering. The only way we can grow and be more impacting is to go together.

There is a saying, “Actions speak louder than words”. There comes a time when the best of intentions, talking and planning must give way to action – otherwise it is all “hot air” and of no value. We are continually challenged to ensure that we maintain our momentum and continue to act in a way that is appropriate and effective.

There is our saying, “Empowering the privileged to empower the poor”. That is our commitment, our vision. We encourage you to consider how you can assist to make this a reality.

Geoff and Lynice
Wigney





EMPOWER HIGHLIGHTS

June • July • August

- Lynice was guest speaker at the Catholic Women's League of Victoria State Conference, held in Narre Warren on 4th June.
- Glen McDonald, from Women of Worth (WOW) Cambodia, visited Bairnsdale in late June. We held an evening at our Empower store on 29th June where Glen spoke about the WOW Cambodia producer group in Seam Reap, Cambodia, followed by a shopping opportunity and supper.



Glen McDonald speaking at Empower's Bairnsdale store in June (left)



Ladies from WOW Cambodia photographed outside the Market Stall they rent (right)
One of the ladies sewing (above)



- Rod and Amanda Wallace (picture below) were married at a lovely ceremony at Eagle Point on 11th July. Rod has previously been on an Empower building trip to Cambodia. Rod and Amanda kindly requested their guests to make a donation to Empower in lieu of wedding presents. We were able to donate \$4,000.00 to Mother's Heart in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to fund training for women in various vocations including hairdressing, beauty and hospitality.



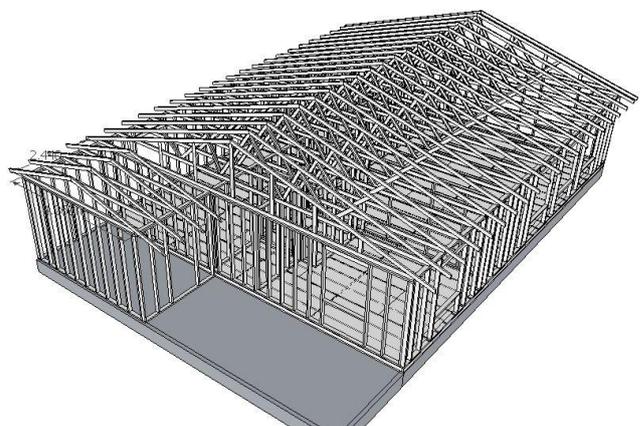
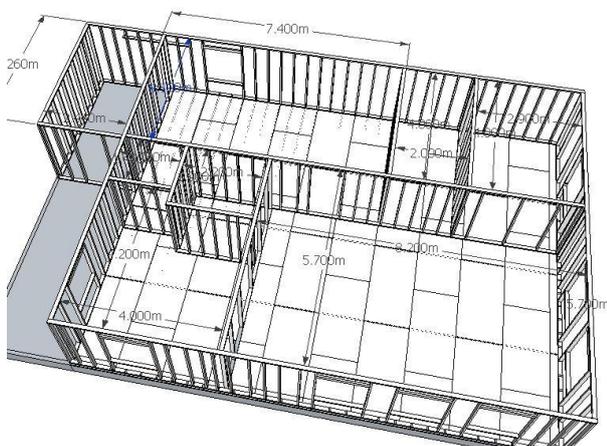
- Ronda Clark represented Empower by running a stall at a quilt show held in Ringwood Church of Christ between 6th - 8th August. She sold \$1,188.00 of Empower products over the three days! Great job Ronda!
- We have made numerous trips to Melbourne exploring potential sites for a retail store. We feel like swimming ducks... it doesn't look like much is happening on the surface, but underneath we are paddling madly! Hopefully there will be a more substantial update in our next "Friends of Empower" newsletter.
- We celebrated the fourth anniversary since the opening of our retail shop in Bairnsdale, with an article included in the August 26th edition of "Bairnsdale News".
- An amount of \$6,200.00 was provided to Clear Skies House in northern Thailand to fund ongoing child sponsorship for 38 children.
- Lisa Trevillick, one of our valuable volunteers, has recently relocated from Bairnsdale to Melbourne. You don't get away that easily Lisa... We'll let you know when our Melbourne shop is about to open. Thank you for all that you have done for Empower so far.



- The construction of the purpose built workshop for Artis Altai in Mongolia is now underway, having commenced on 19th August. This is very exciting, as many obstacles have been overcome along the way. Many thanks to Sondra Simar who has been a champion in arranging for it all to come together! The building should be completed over the next few weeks and we will keep you updated. Empower has contributed \$20,000.00 towards this building project and the women have also made a substantial financial contribution, having saved funds over a number of years.



The foundations being laid for the new Artis Altai workshop. This picture was only taken on 24th August 2015 (above)
Plans for the workshop (below)



HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are interested, there are some ways you can assist us in our vision to “empower the privileged to empower the poor”. You could:

- Purchase products from our retail store at 188 Main Street, Bairnsdale
- Purchase products from our online store at www.empower.org.au
- Donate funds for a specific project or by way of a general donation – either in person at our retail store or online. (100% of funds donated are used towards projects)
- Assist in the cost of Empower establishing a retail presence in Melbourne
- Promote Empower to your family, friends and associates
- Do people read this newsletter? The first person who sends us an email back with the words “Empower rocks” will receive an Empower gift voucher for \$50.00
- Forward this newsletter to those who may be interested in Empower
- “Like” Empower on Facebook and encourage your online friends to follow us



East Gippland Shire Mayor, Peter Neal, helping out by modeling a bag made by the women of WOW