



A MESSAGE FROM GEOFF AND LYNICE

Does anything “push your buttons”? Does anything “get up your nose”? Are there circumstances or issues that “make your blood boil”? Are there times when you think...“that is just not right... and I am not just going to stand here and let it happen... not on my watch”.

Australians enjoy a reputation of having laid back attitudes. “She’ll be right, mate”, is a phrase we celebrate. There is something appealing about someone who is not easily fazed about an issue, it’s just “water off a duck’s back”.

A while ago the house parents at Clear Skies House in Thailand let us know that, due to a change in government policy, the local school could no longer contribute to the ongoing cost of supporting the children. As a consequence, the allowance for meals for the children was to be reduced from 15 Baht (\$0.60) per child per meal to 13 Baht (\$0.52) per child per meal. Think on that for a moment.

Think on it a bit more...

Does it really matter? A bit less meat, a bit more rice. The kids will be fine. There are many worse off than them.

Actually, it does matter. It matters a lot. It is not fair. It is not happening – not on our watch. So, we have increased our support of Clear Skies House to make up the difference. No great financial sacrifice on our part. It reinforces to the house parents that we do

care, that the welfare of the children is important and that we will stand alongside them as they sacrifice their own comfort to care for the children.

Ignorance of injustice is bad, but lacking compassion is worse. Ignorance is a lack of knowledge. Lacking compassion is a heart issue – it goes to the very core of our being. How important is “self” and our level of comfort and our lifestyle compared to the desperate needs of others? What are we prepared to sacrifice? Think on that for a moment.

Think on it a bit more...

We are so grateful for the many supporters of Empower who take a stand, who are so impacted by injustice that they are compelled to act, to make a difference. We hope that injustice will get up our noses and make us uncomfortable, to cause us to respond in a positive way and to be part of the solution.

Geoff and Lynice Wigney





INTRODUCING EDEN MINISTRY

Eden was established in 2003 to combat the injustices of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Asia's red light districts. A part of the work of Eden involves developing relationships with poor and vulnerable women who have been trafficked, coerced or deceived into prostitution. The women and their children are offered the hope of freedom and a new start by providing a safe place to live where they can receive holistic restoration and healing of mind, body and spirit.

Eden gives a special pearl necklace to women in the red light districts which includes a card as follows: "A pearl is rare, valuable and beautiful. Its unique shape, size, shine and surface blemishes all reflect the struggles of its life including extreme water temperatures and harsh waves. Your life is like this precious pearl. You are one of a kind, you are valuable. No matter what extreme situations and struggles you have in life, you can arise as a beautiful, special jewel of great worth".



Each woman who joins Eden is cared for in a safe and compassionate environment, free from abuse and trauma. Their physical and emotional issues are addressed in a supportive way as the women progress through their journey of healing. Eden has a "Dream Wall" on which the women are encouraged to paint images of their dreams. The women are encouraged to pursue their dreams and complete life skills and vocational training so they can be equipped for a positive future. They receive employment and on-the-job training in jewellery-making and design.





The sale of jewellery provides the women with sustainable income as well as funding new training opportunities. Each piece of jewellery includes a personal story of restoration and hope – adding value to each beautiful handmade item. Here is a selection of stories:



“I never thought that I could make anything of value with my hands, but now I’m so proud that I can create beautiful jewellery that women want to wear”. Xiao Fang

Yadanar’s story – Yadanar walked with a pronounced limp. Her traffickers had smashed her knee when she tried to run away. She was afraid she would never be free from her “walk of shame”. With Eden she is now living a life of restored dignity and purpose.

“I used to be a person without purpose and without dreams. I had given up all hope of being married. After coming to Eden I was able to find again what I had lost. They helped me to believe in the dream once again. I never thought I could be this happy and get married”. Xiao Mei

Empower has been honoured to partner with Eden since January 2014. You can find out more about Eden at www.edenministry.org

THE JUSTICE CONFERENCE 2016

Last week we attended a two day Justice Conference in Melbourne. There were many inspiring speakers and great organizations involved. It was a time of learning, encouragement and challenge.

Just some of the things we learned...

1. Be intentional – Go out of your way to get in the way of injustice.
2. Be creative – Explore new ways of pursuing our objectives.
3. Be persistent – Combatting injustice is a marathon, not a sprint.
4. Be joyful – Maintain a spirit of joy as you pursue justice.

The Justice Conference is on again in Melbourne on 26th-27th October 2017. We were the very first people to buy tickets!



CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

This is probably not news to you, but Christmas is coming!

It is a very important time for Empower, as many of our producer groups enjoy making beautiful Christmas decorations and Christmas cards – so we need to sell as many of them as possible over the next 8 weeks. That is where you come in (as in, come in to Empower and buy them, or purchase them from our online shop).

We have a wide range of handmade products which are ideal Christmas gifts – so please consider purchasing as many Christmas gifts as possible from Empower this year.

For the person who has everything, we have Christmas donation cards where you can give them a card telling them that you have made a donation of whatever amount you like to one of the following causes on their behalf:

- Child sponsorship for Clear Skies House
- Rescue of girls from brothels
- Vocational training/small business development
- Tertiary education expenses

