



# ROTARY CLUB OF WAGGA WAGGA



Chartered in 1929 Club 3269 District 9700

P.O. BOX 246  
WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650  
AUSTRALIA

8<sup>th</sup> April 2011

Mr Ajoy Joshi  
PO Box 1084  
CROWS NEST NSW 1585

Dear Ajoy,

## FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT PROJECT IN INDIA 2011

Thank you for attending our "Darkness to Light" Fundraising Dinner in February at the Mater Dei Multi Purpose Hall. Having yourself and Mr. Srinivas working so hard in the kitchen along with Her Excellency the High Commissioner for India Mrs Sujatha Singh and nearly 300 other guests and entertainers made the evening so enjoyable.

Dr Alok Sharma (a member of our Club who is an Ophthalmologist) has just returned from Yamuna Nagar Haryana, India, where in conjunction with the members of the Rotary Club of Yamuna Nagar Riviera they held our third Eye Camp from the 12 to 14 March. Our latest exciting news from the recent District 9700 Conference held in Orange was that **our Club was awarded the International Service Award 2010 – 2011** for the Darkness to Light Project in India.

This year we had a contingent from Wagga and Jerrabomberra of 5 Rotarians and partners to meet up with the Rotarians from Yamuna Nagar as well as the Doctors from the Mohan Eye Institute from Delhi. Those joining Dr Alok Sharma were Dr Peter Crozier from the Rotary Club of Wollundry Wagga Wagga and his wife Gail, Mr Will Blackwell from the Rotary Club of Queanbeyan West and his wife Dr Leone Harvey-Smith.

Our Rotary Club has received fantastic responses from many people and Companies since commencing with its "Darkness to Light" Project in 2005, where Doctors undertake cataract operations and provided glasses to the very poor and to date have raised over \$130,000, a remarkable achievement. Ajoy, this is the third time we have had the pleasure of you tempting out taste buds and the food just gets better every time. It is a really generous gesture of Nilgiri's Restaurant to do this for us and it is easy to see why you have been voted best Indian Restaurant for the last 5 years. Many of our guests commented on your food and when they knew that you were coming back to Wagga we new we wouldn't have trouble filling the tables.

The Dinners are a very popular night in Wagga, virtually sold out in a week by word of mouth and an excellent platform to showcase Indian culture and to raise funds to help the needy in India for their free eye care.

The night was very special with entertainment from the Wagga Male Rugby Choir, dance performances by Poornima Sharma's Indian Dance Centre from Sydney and Ben White and three other talented girls from Kildare College singing.

The many young Wagga people who volunteered their services to help behind the bar and to serve meals did a fantastic job and all received certificates of appreciation.

Your generosity in coming to Wagga, donating and cooking all the magnificent food is greatly appreciated and it enabled the Rotary Club of raise over \$30,000 on the night and assist in achieving the excellent 2011 Eye Camp outcomes detailed below. A very entertaining auction by our own Paul Galloway quickly emptied many people's wallets with \$9,000 being made on the various items on offer.

The following statistics are the results of the recent 3 day Eye Camp;

1. 1,336 patients checked for vision issues
2. 206 free cataract operations undertaken.
3. 1 private cataract operation arranged at a cost of R/- 4,000 (\$90)
4. 363 patients given a new pair of glasses
5. Some 1,800 medications issued.

Dr Sharma has already investigated a number of projects to support the vision impaired within the Riverina and has obtained Board approval to progress them.

At our meeting held on 7 April 2011 we made a presentation of a PEARL camera and OpenBook software valued at \$1,900 to a young Wagga woman who was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at the age of 13 years old and is now legally blind. She is now married and in 2006 enrolled with the Tabor College as a Diploma of Ministry student. The OpenBook software is a scanning software that converts scanned images of books using Optical Character Recognition into a format which interacts with a screen reader to audibly read the print to her. The Pearl camera is the hardware that is compatible with the software and will scan any physical book, mail, any printed material which has opened up a great number of avenues of opportunity for her to access books and improve her independence which is empowering and very useful for her studies and day to day living.

Yours faithfully,



Philip Cross  
Past President,  
Rotary Club of Wagga Wagga