



AUSTRALIAN ROTARY HEALTH

An Idea!

In 1981 Ian Scott, a member of the Rotary Club of Mornington, Victoria, suggested Rotary establish a fund specifically for research into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). He believed that if Rotary Clubs across Australia could raise \$2,000,000, the interest earned from investing the money could fund SIDS research.

By 1983, Ian Scott's vision was realised. The Australian Rotary Health Research Fund was a viable organisation and in 1985 grants of up to \$100,000 for research into SIDS were disbursed.

Today

In 2012, **Australian Rotary Health** is an Australian Rotary multi-district project supported by 1,175 Rotary Clubs and 34,370 Rotarians. Since 2000 Australian Rotary Health has channelled over \$20,000,000 into Australian health and medical research projects.

In 2012 \$2,737,000 was disbursed in research grants and scholarships.

In 2011 \$1,569,588 was received in donations from around Australia – primarily from Rotary Clubs. The interest earned on investments, along with the funds received in donations, enabled the record disbursement!

Areas of Research

Australian Rotary Health has invested in broad-ranging research projects including SIDS, Adolescent Health, Environmental Health Problems of the Aged, Family Health and diseases such as Ross River Virus, Malaria, Bowel Cancer, Prostate Cancer and many others. In 2000 Australian Rotary Health adopted Mental Illness research as its focus and committed to removing the stigma of mental illness through education and community forums.

Health Scholarships

As well as funding research, Australian Rotary Health also provides health related scholarships. Over 300 Indigenous Australians have received top-up scholarships valued at \$5,000 per year to allow them to continue their studies to achieve a health related degree. Since this program began in 2003, 29 Indigenous doctors, 27 Indigenous nurses and another 72 graduates in such health areas as Dentistry, Speech Pathology, Podiatry, Physiotherapy, and Occupational Therapy have graduated. A total of 128 Indigenous Health workers – assisted by Australian Rotary Health scholarships – are now in the Australian workforce.

In 2007 Australian Rotary Health introduced Rural Medical Scholarships, a \$5,000 annual scholarship for medical students prepared to work in a rural area during their final years of study. The program was funded again in 2008 and 2009 – 78 doctors into rural hospitals through funding from Australian Rotary Health. From 2010 Rural Medical Scholarships are funded by various Rotary Clubs and individuals.

In 2008 Australian Rotary Health began funding the Parnell Rural Nursing Scholarships. With the financial assistance of a benefactor, four scholarships valued at \$12,500 each are awarded to nurses in Queensland and NSW who complete a clinical placement in a rural area. Several other Rural Nurses are now funded by other Rotary Clubs and individuals. Australian Rotary Health – getting nurses into rural hospitals.

Mental Health Community Forums

Since 2000 Australian Rotary Health has arranged, with the help of local Rotary Clubs, over 500 community forums to create more awareness and provide information on mental health issues. An estimated 25,000 people have attended a forum and Australian Rotary Health is acknowledged by the Commonwealth of Australia as a leading force in the de-stigmatisation of mental illness.

Mental Health First Aid Workshops

Since 2010 Australian Rotary Health has offered MHFA courses (**12 hour course over two consecutive days**) to targeted subgroups of communities across Australia. Providing the necessary skills and knowledge to assist a person better manage a developing mental health problem in themselves, a family member, or colleague, these courses are being provided to Rotary Clubs who have previously run a Mental Health Forum.