

# It was late coming but not too late .....

A Message From Mr. Henry Tang, JP  
Secretary of The Love the Elderly & Children Foundation

1st May 2003 has been an unforgettable milestone for us because it marked the completion and the operation of our Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel.

When the Commonwealth Government has given the approval-in-principle to build a 30 plus 1 beds hostel for the Indo-Chinese frail aged in 1989, there were four organisations worked together, led by Mr. Tran Phuoc Thang, the then President of the NSW Indo-China Chinese Association. There were the Khmer Community of NSW, the Lao Community Advancement Co-op, Indo-China Refugee Association and the Vietnamese Community in Australia - NSW Chapter. These four organisations worked extremely hard to secure the funding and negotiated with the NSW Government to top-up the rest to ensure 100% level. The Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel Project Inc. secured \$2.13 million from both the Commonwealth & State Governments and raised over \$1 million from the Chinese and Indo-Chinese communities. As land and building costs were constantly increasing, the then Committee could not meet the difference to commence construction. However, it managed to purchase the current site in 1993 with funds from the Governments and donations from the community.

During that specified period, most organisations were actively involved in their own respective projects and fund-raising events were not cashing in adequate funds. It was a period of economic downturn and faced many financial challenges but was able to battle through and maintained the project as funded. It was not until the situation became very desperate that one last attempt was made to revive the fund-raising efforts to develop this project.

In 2001, a number of community leaders came together, a total of 31 people, to establish a foundation to raise enough funds and to finish the hostel project as funded by the Governments. Within the space of 2 years, a Foundation has been officially formed, the low care accommodation facility at Cabramatta Road, Bonnyrigg was constructed and fully operational to take eligible residents. Once again, we were able to gain community confidence and satisfied Commonwealth and State Governments to resume this project until its completion in August 2003.

It would be a total loss if the Indo-Chinese community could not build the hostel when the Governments have promised two-third funding. It would be a dreadful shame if it were not able to raise the one-third amount. It was so close to forfeiting this project. Suddenly like a ray breaking through the heaven's cloud, many people could see the logic and realise how much our elderly folks would miss out for not having an accommodation facility, which they can claim their own. I have likened this whole project as like the awaiting spring that is late in coming. We could not bear the idea that our elderly folks were not care for in a safe and secure homelike residential facility.

Once we have decided to proceed, we put all our energy to ensure success and the trustees of the Foundation took up the challenge and made a commitment to complete this worthwhile project. With a united front, we proceed to fundraise around \$1 million to cover the construction and operational costs through the 'Gold (\$100) and Silver (\$20) Bricks' method and fund-raising dinners. We received very wide support and individuals were quick to response to our call for 'Gold and Silver Bricks'. To show that we were good financial planner, we talked to banks for loans/bank guarantees to ensure that we did not have a cash-flow problem. As a matter of fact, we have secured so many options in case we run out of funds to build and operate the hostel.

In the end, the builder was so co-operative and helpful with the payments and that the Commonwealth Department of Aged Care and Health was willing to provide advance payment of subsidy to get the hostel operating quickly. All these also contribute to the smooth operation and maintain a high level of service from the start.

Indeed it was a late spring in its coming but it still brought its splendour of colours, an air of heightened activities and plentiful of joys and laughter, not of children running around but elderly folks living together. They now enjoy healthy meals, mahjong and Tai-chi and watch Chinese programme from a Chinese satellite channel.

The Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel has given many elderly folks happiness and relief to their children and grandchildren. It has also brought warmth and hope for many. In a way, it has changed people's mind about living in such a home. It has now become a HOME and made each resident feel welcome.

Mr. Henry Tang JP  
Secretary of the Love the Elderly & Children Foundation



曾澤平先生在基金會籌款活動上。

## 澳洲新報 AUSTRALIAN CHINESE DAILY

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今年5月1日，印支高齡宿舍舉行落成剪綵儀式，歷經十數載，千呼萬喚始出來，可說是遲來的春天。

十幾年前，當時擔任紐省越棉寮華人聯誼會會長陳盛福先生，代表越南社區、高棉社區和寮國四個社區與聯邦政府高齡護理部、紐省衛生廳護理部簽訂協議，聯邦與紐省高齡護理部門撥款二百多萬元，華人社區自籌資金一百多萬元，籌劃興建印支高齡宿舍，以滿足社會在這方面的迫切需求。當時，不少熱心人士聞訊紛紛慷慨解囊，予以支持。後來，由於原參與此項計劃有關社團人事變易，有的宣布退出該項計劃，籌建委員會無法籌到足夠的配合款項，致使該計劃無法付諸實施，一擱再擱，轉眼十數載。真是：欲成一事艱難多，撫胸長嘆無奈何！

2001年，聯邦和紐省政府有關部門鑒於該項計劃一拖再拖，遙遙無期，便通知有關機構，若不能於近期籌到足夠配合資金放在銀行存證，便要取消該項計劃。

“政府出大頭，華人社區出小頭，這樣的事都做不到，華人有何面目？不行！怎樣都不能讓政府取消該計劃。”原參與發起該項事宜的幾位熱心人士便四出活動，決心重新組建一個基金會承接、承擔起籌建與興建印支高齡宿舍的重任。我也積極參與基金會的組建工作並成為基金會信託人。

眾人拾柴火焰高。今天，印支高齡宿舍終於落成了。雖是遲來的春天，好過春天不來，同樣值得慶賀。她向世人昭示：我們華人是志氣的；決定要做的善事一定要做到，一定能做到。“只許成功，不許失敗”。博愛老幼信託基金會全體成員當時這句誓言，表達了大家堅強的決心。

印支高齡宿舍的建成說明澳洲華人是團結的。籌款一百多萬，數目不小，沒有眾人的支援能做到麼？！

印支高齡宿舍的建成說明澳洲華人是熱心社會公益的。有位信託人並不是很有錢，他聽說為籌建印支高齡宿舍組建博愛老幼信託基金會，他認為參加基金會是自己為社會做點有益之事的機會，便毅然參加基金會組織。這種熱心社會公益的精神，十分難能可貴。還有，基金會為籌集善款，發起“金磚、銀磚運動”。一百元一塊金磚，二十元一塊銀磚。許多人慷慨解紛紛紛購買金磚銀磚。為籌建老人宿舍添磚加瓦。善款不分多寡，聚沙成塔，集腋成裘。擱置了十多年的興建印支高齡宿舍計劃終於功德圓滿。

印支高齡宿舍雖是遲來的春天，仍然值得慶賀！她象春天給人們帶來溫暖、帶來歡樂、帶來希望，讓我們舉起雙手去歡迎她！

遲來的春天

博愛老幼信託基金會秘書長曾澤平