

Celebrating 10th Year of Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel

Dr. Peter Wong AM

Whether we like to look at the history of humankind on earth or indeed our own life, 10 years is not really a long time.

Somehow for me, it seems to be a long long time since my association with the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel.

Mr. Tran Phuoc Thang and Kek Tai reminded me it was around 1998, one afternoon, three of us sat down and discussed the building of the hostel. By that time the land had long been purchased and the Commonwealth Department that provided the approval-in-principle demanded a resolution by the end of 1998-1999 Financial Year so that the construction of the 30 plus 1 respite beds were imminent. Finance was indeed hard to obtain at that time and there appeared to be no generous donors in sight.

At the end of the meeting, we agreed it would be a great pity if such a wonderful vision failed to eventuate and the Indo-Chinese elderly who are frail will not have a place that they can call home and grow old together in their language and culture.

Together we approached the Commonwealth Government, which decided to give us another chance to commence building within 12 months. With that permission, we seek solution with different alternatives, including attracting partners from different communities - showing that we have the capacity to build it.

At the end, together with Harry Tang, Chung Van Thao and many other friends, we decided to go along the same concept as the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation, in which we would try to invite Trustees to pledge to build the hostel, each Trustee would donate \$10,000 each towards the project.

The response was tremendous. Among the Trustees were Mr. Oai Trieu, who became our Interim Chairman. The other Trustee I must acknowledge is Pinkham Simmalavong, who became our Treasurer.



Dr Peter Wong and guests in his 2011 Chairmanship Handover Ceremony

With the help of many donors and volunteers, who donated generously both in money and in time, the hostel was finally opened in May 2004.

Even though Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel was only a 30 beds hostel, it has been a shining example of unity, dedication and sheer hard work. It was a fulfillment of the needs of the elderly from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam who many came to Australia as refugees. It affirms the fact that Multiculturalism is vibrant and alive in this country where many have adopted Australia as their home.

Of course, we cannot forget that without the support of our governments, both from the State and Federal levels, this would be an impossible task.

And gratitude must also be given to Fairfield City Council and her councilors, who had assisted us every step of our way.

I am honoured again to be associated with the completion of our second stage by the end of 2013. By then, we will have a 88 beds hostel, which would ensure the long term future of our frail elderly people having a good home to live.

But every project, every institution, the success is not in terms of buildings, facilities or services available, rather, the most pivotal element is the people who provide love and care to others. We are therefore most grateful for our workers, be it our manager, the office secretaries, nurses, kitchen hands and volunteers. We thank you, for you are the soul of our hostel.

Who deserve the greatest credit? In my years of association with the Indo-Chinese community, I have heard many stories of hardship and suffering, of wandering in the open sea, dying, hunger and thirst in coming to Australia. But many kept their faiths through their toils and tribulations and they have told me, it was the Almighty that delivered them into the livings.

So let us give Him – Jesus or Buddha or Allah, all the praises, depending on your own faith. And may this hostel continues to grow so that more elderly people will receive good quality of care. And may their children and their children's children always take into their hearts to this hostel as their home away from their motherland.

