



Senta Bilong Helpim Support (Aust) Inc.

## 3rd Annual Report October 2002

### **The office bearers of the committee 2002**

President	Anthony Cheevers
Vice president	Rebecca Edwards
Secretary	Pauline McKenzie
Treasurer	Victoria Higgins

### **General committee members**

Chris Blackburn Joan Cheevers,  
Judy Chow-Fairhall, Irene Carman  
Elizabeth Lewis, Merrilyn Murnane  
Noreen McCartney Fr Tim O'Toole,

### **Liaison Representatives**

Medical liaison	Elizabeth Lewis
Coordinator for patients bought from PNG	Irene Carmen

## **Background**

Over the past decade Bro. James Coucher C.P. OBE, a member of the Passionist Community, has been working tirelessly for the disabled people of the Sandaun Province in Papua New Guinea. In 1994 "physio by video" was established. This was a joint venture by members of the Monash Medical Centre Melbourne and Bro. Jim, where disabled children who could not receive treatment in P.N.G. were brought to Melbourne for surgery. On returning to Vanimo their progress was recorded by video and instruction for rehabilitation sent by video, phone and fax. The medical personnel visit as often as possible, usually about every 4-6 months.

After the tragic tsunami on the 17th July 1998 Bro. Jim resolved to establish the 'Senta Bilong Helpim', a care centre for children with disabilities and their families.

As more and more of the people become aware of the physical improvement due to surgery and physiotherapy treatment, the demand has become an enormous challenge. Bro. Jim realised the need to provide, not only rehabilitation resources, but also facilities to look after disabled children as their mothers work in their gardens. Previously these children were left alone to try to fend for themselves as the terrain makes it impossible for them to accompany their parents during the daytime.

Bro James asked for assistance from his supporters in Australia and as a result the support group in Melbourne was established. The Senta Bilong Helpim Support (Aust) Inc (SBHSAI) started in August 1999 in Melbourne, Australia.

In PNG in February 2000 the new building at Waromo was opened and the Senta became a reality. The Senta is manned by a dedicated group of volunteers who work in conjunction with the PNG hospitals and the visiting medical team (which includes a neurosurgeon, orthopedic surgeon, paediatric cardiologist, ENT surgeon, paediatrician, physiotherapist, nurses, plaster technician).

Here in Australia there are dedicated members of the Senta Bilong Helpim Support (Aust) Inc. team who are striving to keep on improving resources and help meet running costs at the Senta until it can function independently. Volunteers are also required in Melbourne and Brisbane to offer accommodation and /or transport of patients (and their guardians) for medical care whilst in Australia. This is usually about a 3-4 week period.



## Message from the President

The Annual General Meeting is upon us again and time for reflection is necessary to guide us in our future direction. This direction is centered around our Statement of Purpose plus inputs from Br.James, our medical team, our volunteers in PNG plus some ideas from our group in Senta Bilong Helpim

Support (Aust) Inc.

In our title is the word, " Support", and again communication is essential to gain support .Through the "Newsletter" we know the people we are supporting and we see their faces. We have seen " the building" grow from a hole in the ground to a huge vibrant Senta in just a couple of years and from reading the report from Br.James he hasn't finished yet as he has ideas of a hostel.

Thank you Pauline for your dedication and production of the Newsletter.

Thank you for letting us know Claire

Showing us the medics at work

Telling us Harry's Story

Keeping us informed of the Bus Saga

Showing us Willy on his trike

Letting us read Appolonia's Story-----Makes it all worthwhile doesn't it?

I would like to extend thanks to all our supporters who are now giving on a regular basis as this is essential for future planning.

Our Treasurer, Victoria Higgins, is to be sincerely thanked for her work in this area.

Special thanks to the Rotary Clubs of Geelong for sponsoring another container to P.N.G.Their help greatly enhances our Support.

We look forward to another visit from Br, James in Oct. and to hear his personal report of Sent Bilong Helpim (P.N.G.) Inc

**A**nthony Cheevers  
**President**



## Medical Report 2001/2002

*Since the last Annual Report there have been 2 Medical trips to Vanimo.*

### **1. Drs Radford and Lewis.**

Dorothy Radford and I went in May 2002 spending 5 days in Vanimo and in Port Moresby. Most of the children at the Senta were seen and reassessed. Clinics were done at the hospital and Dorothy gave a lecture to the nurses, while I did one operation. I spoke to the administration about the Twinning project that Southern Health [MMC] is discussing with Ausaid. This project run by Ausaid links hospitals in Australia with those in PNG for mutual benefit. The spin-off for the Senta is a pool of expertise regularly available, funded by Ausaid in Vanimo.

### **2. Dr Annette Holian.**

Annette was in Vanimo during her trip to PNG in September 2002 to do Orthopaedic work. She reviewed some patients and assessed others for surgery.

*During my stay in Port Moresby I was able to meet one of the Board members of the Cheshire Home. They are struggling for funds also. It would be interesting to explore Government interest in Disabled services in the Country. Disabled sport is just starting and there are many opportunities to make a difference to the lives of the disabled through sport.*

*The future of Medical services in Sandaun Province looks good provided the twinning programme can flourish. It provides an opportunity for planning and upgrading of services to the whole community including disabled children and adults.*

**Dr Elizabeth Lewis**  
**Medical Representative**



# Report from St Gemma's Senta Bilong Helpim

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started last year's report by saying that 2001 had been an extremely good year for the Senta Bilong Helpim. Well 2002 has been no exception and, if anything has been an even better year.

The year got away to a good start with the necessary building board permission for the house funded by the British High Commission, coming through. There had been months of delay due mainly to the fact that the board did not meet. The day after the approval came through, Bro. Martin started the building.

The job did take longer than expected because of the terrain. Digging the foundations and the septic tank was a huge task as the block is mostly solid rock, however, by the beginning of June it was completed and ready for renting and we had a tenant that was ready to move in as soon as it was ready.

The monthly rent coming in has made a big difference in our finances and we have hardly had to draw on any of the funds from Australia since the house was occupied. (June 2002)

Also, a great boost to the finances has been our pig and poultry project. They have been very successful and, because of the success we have enlarged the piggery.

The store has continued to be a steady means of income.

We have been able to enlarge and develop these projects as well as building an office at the Senta. It has been our aim to become self sufficient at least in the normal running expenses. However I don't want you to think that fund raising here is no longer necessary. We have plans for further development that will need a lot of financing, but more on that later.

The benefits of last year's visit by Jane Burnton were certainly realized this year. The volunteers have grown in confidence and with almost another year's experience are really proficient at the physiotherapy aspect of the Senta.

I am stuck for words to express the value of Claire Byrne's work.

Claire is in her second year. I have nothing but praise for her first year but this year she really has excelled and the Senta Bilong Helpim is a place of excellence and professionalism, a place we can all be proud of but above all, a place where disadvantaged children can come to learn, to be loved and cared for, due almost entirely to Claire's hard work and dedication. Because of all Claire's work, effort and dedication, I am confident that the Senta is now at the stage where we can carry on without a fulltime expatriate volunteer. With this in mind, Claire has put in many hours of preparing programs for the future. She has worked one on one with all the volunteers and given each of them responsibility in all aspects of the work in looking after and teaching the children.

Added to Claire's efforts we have the enthusiasm of Harry who benefited so much from his 3 months in Australia and so his enthusiasm coupled with the dedication, experience and hard work of the other volunteers. I am sure we can look forward with confidence to the future.

An important part of the success of the Senta has been the visits from our doctors and physio therapists friends from Australia and I think these visits will be even more important in the future in order to give reassurance and confidence to our local volunteers.

Looking to next year, if we can raise the necessary money, I am hopeful of expanding the work of the Senta by building a hostel in which we can house children with disabilities from the inland villages. Up to now these children are neglected because of the lack of suitable housing as well as the shortage of funds to fly them in and care for them along with their guardians. We need \$12,000.00 to purchase the land that is available at Waromo and I would estimate a further \$30,000.00 for the necessary buildings.

Also next year we are hoping that one, or possibly even 2 of our volunteers, will be accepted at the Divine Word University to do a course in physiotherapy. The lack of the education standard set for entry may be a problem, however I am hoping that their experience and dedication over the years will open the doors for them.

This year we have had an average of 25 children attending the Senta daily. The number should have been higher but because of the ongoing problems with transport, we have not been able to pick up all the children. As you know, last year our main pick up vehicle crashed and was written off and unfortunately it was not insured. However we were fortunate enough to find a buyer for the wreck and we got K22,000.00 for it. We were then able to purchase a Toyota High Ace bus for K25,000.00. There have been long delays in getting the vehicle from Tabubil, where it was purchased, to Vanimo. I did see it as I passed through Moresby and it is in reasonably good condition but I was a little disappointed with the amount of rust. I was hoping that in getting one from inland that it would be relatively free from rust. It is very difficult buying a vehicle, or anything else for that matter, when you are in a place as remote as Vanimo and not able to see what it is that you are buying. However, from what I have seen, I think we got good value for what we paid and hopefully, a reliable vehicle that will meet our needs at least until our hostel is up and running as that is our priority major expenditure for next year.

Before closing this report I must again thank all those involved in Senta Bilong Helpim Support Group for your ongoing support. It would be wrong to single out individuals as there are many who put in hours of work from time that they cannot really spare, but I must give special thanks to Pauline McKenzie for her boundless enthusiasm, effort and work which has not diminished even though she has so much more on her plate at the moment.

We at St. Gemma's Senta Bilong Helpim, continue to pray for Pauline and her family and all our friends and benefactors and give thanks to God for their generosity and support.

**Bro James Coucher CP OBE**