

MEDIA RELEASE

Drawers emptied as FNQ digs deep for YWAM Glasses Drive

Sunday 22nd July, 2018

PATIENTS in remote areas of Papua New Guinea will soon be gifted much-needed pairs of prescription glasses and sunglasses thanks to the generosity of Far Northerners who have donated thousands of pairs of surplus eyewear during the YWAM Glasses Drive.

Yolonde Entsch, the Cairns Community Ambassador for YWAM Medical Ships, and Morgan Elliston, the Cairns Youth Ambassador for YWAM, were thrilled today to hand over some of the 3500-plus pairs of donated glasses to the optometry team onboard the MV YWAM PNG Medical Ship.

The ship has docked in Cairns for two days on its way to PNG where it carries out vital medical and outreach activities in remote areas of the country, including assessing the eyesight of Papuan patients, providing them with glasses and operating on the more serious cases of cataracts and pterygiums.

“Morgan and I are absolutely thrilled with this result and we can’t thank the Far North Queensland community enough,” Mrs Entsch said at the handover event today (SUN).

“When I last visited PNG with YWAM I pledged to collect as many pairs of glasses, especially sunglasses, as possible because I saw first-hand what a dramatic and immediate difference it makes when people are able to see and read again.

“Eye health is critical and these glasses will go a very long way towards helping children and young people start or resume their education and enabling adults to be active members of the community once more.

“We’d like to say the biggest ‘thank you’ to all the Far Northerners who donated glasses, and the many organisations that supported the campaign in various ways – from the libraries and schools which hosted collection points, the businesses that rallied staff to bring in old pairs of glasses, Ports North which donated the wharfage for the ship here in Cairns.”

Miss Elliston said she had been overwhelmed with the positive response from people to the campaign.

“So many people have old pairs of glasses in their drawers or cupboards that they don’t use anymore but they’re unwilling to throw them out because they usually cost a lot of money,” she said.

“People I spoke to when I was collecting the glasses really appreciated the opportunity to donate them to PNG because even though it’s Australia’s closest neighbour it’s incredibly disadvantaged in a lot of areas.

“I’ve applied to volunteer onboard the YWAM Medical Ship later this year and I’m really looking forward to being able to see for myself how something as simple as a pair of glasses can change someone’s life.”

Rotary District 9550 has been a big supporter of the campaign and the glasses were handed over during a visit by more than 60 Rotary members to the ship, where they toured the facilities, learned more about YWAM’s activities and brought along additional bags of donated glasses.

Rotary Past District Governor and event MC Ida Portella said the campaign aligned closely with the Rotary International theme for 2018-19 to ‘*Be the Inspiration*’. “We aim to inspire others to help make a difference, not just in our local communities but to help communities right around the world,” she said.

Members of the public who are interested in finding out more about YWAM’s work can tour the ship this Monday 23rd July; visits must be pre-booked by contacting Anna Scott at YWAM on 0439 367 198.

Any final donations of glasses can be posted to PO Box 14, Bungalow, QLD 4870 or dropped at any branch of Alive Pharmacy.

Media contact: Heather Law (0409 638 943) or email playonwordsconsulting@outlook.com

Information on YWAM (Youth With a Mission) Medical Ships:

YWAM Medical Ships operates a training and medical ship, the MV YWAM PNG, in remote communities of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in collaboration with PNG’s National Department of Health and provincial health teams. The vessel is equipped with an onboard dentistry clinic, day procedure unit and laboratory. In addition to the services provided onboard, YWAM Medical Ships deploys teams ashore to set up primary health care, health education, and optometry clinics.

Eye care is very limited in the rural areas of Papua New Guinea. In addition to providing patients with glasses, patients that are identified with cataracts and pterygiums (growth on the eye) are sent to YWAM’s surgical team aboard the MV YWAM PNG for surgery, which in many cases, restores the patient’s sight.

YWAM Medical Ships has a strong focus on education and prevention. The distribution of sunglasses can make a significant difference in protecting eyesight and reducing the risk of pterygiums.

- ENDS -