

Collaborating to support stroke victims in Sri Lanka

The Rotary Club of Flemington Kensington in District 9800 partnered with the Rotary Club of Colombo District 3220, the Australian Sri Lankan Association in Adelaide, RARE SA and Rotary Donations in Kind to deliver equipment to outfit stroke units in 9 hospitals.

Sri Lanka has a very high incidence of people suffering a stroke yet just 74 dedicated stroke beds across 9 hospitals in the whole country. Access to a stroke unit is possible for about 14% of sufferers - in high income countries it is 91%.

Following a meeting between the Minister for Health, PDG Senake Amerasinghe and PDG Pubudu De Goysa from Rotary Colombo, Dr Harsha Gunasekara, President of the National Stroke Association, and PP Peter Cribb of Flemington Kensington Rotary, a project was planned.

A detailed and extensive 'wish list' was compiled by Dr Gunasekara and his team and conveyed to Rotary Donations in Kind. As hospital beds were still in short supply following the COVID pandemic, Peter Cribb reached out to RARE who were able to assist.

With assistance from former MLA Craig Ondarchie, a connection was made with the Australian Sri Lankan Association in Adelaide. Through their President Nishani Seneviratne funds were collected to pay for shipping of a container from RARE in Adelaide.

ASLA members worked with the RARE team led by Manager Dave Cockshell to identify equipment and load the container. They were assisted by Dr. Charitha Perera and Dr. Mihiri Pere from the Sri Lanka Consulate of Adelaide.

Meanwhile, a second container funded by Flemington Kensington Rotary was organised through Rotary Donations in Kind, West Footscray. This container was loaded by Flemington Kensington Rotarians and the DiK crew and shipped 2 months later.

Equipment sent included:

86 hospital beds and mattresses

Patient monitors and blood pressure machines, transfer trolleys, examination tables, 47 wheelchairs and 24 walkers, 23 walking sticks.

16 toilet overframe seats

6 medication trolleys, 15 cupboards, 5 tables, 24 patient chairs

11 cartons medical supplies, blankets and bed linen.

In Sri Lanka, Dr Harsha Gunasekara worked with his team to identify the needs of each hospital, and allocated resources by priority. The Rotary Club of Colombo facilitated

unloading and storage of equipment on arrival and arranged for signage to acknowledge the contributing and supporting organisations.

The first allocations went to the Teaching Hospital in Nagoda, in the Southern Province which received 20 hospital beds, 10 wheelchairs, 5 commode chairs, 2 syringe pumps, 2 transfer trolleys, 5 cupboards and 3 tables.

Dr Harsha Gunasekara reported that the hospital staff were delighted with these items, which have already made such a difference to patient care.

Despite several setbacks, roadblocks, challenges and difficulties, perseverance, persistence and exploring possibilities resulted in success. Don't accept what seems to be insurmountable: think outside the box, explore options, ask for help and never give up!

Thank you to everyone who participated in any way.

This project shows the strength in Rotary connections; the tentacles of **reach** which come together to have such **impact**, and our **engagement** with the broader community.

Image #1:

Minister for Health SL, PP Peter Cribb, PDG Senake Amerasinghe, PDG Pubdu de Zoysa, Dr Harsha Gunasekara meeting in Colombo, 2023.



Packing container #1 at RARE:



Loading at Donations in Kind:



Nagoda Teaching Hospital:



