

The devastation of the bushfires in Australia in late 2019 and early 2020 made international headlines. The country reeled in the massive destruction occurring in all four corners of the country. Australians, having the largest per capita volunteer fire fighters in the world, responded en masse. This was a national crisis.

This crisis hit home to me. I was a Rotary Youth Exchange student to Swansea, New South Wales, Australia in 1979-80, sponsored by Rotary Club of Whitby, D7070. It was this year as an exchange student that I learned so much about giving back, about generosity, about international peace in the world, and about service above self. Forty years later, I still benefit from the lessons learned and the love received while I was in Australia.

In order to support Rotary in Australia, I approached my Rotary Club, Rotary Club of Mississauga West, to ask for \$1,000 to donate. My mother was also offering a \$1,000 donation. Shortly afterwards, there was a D7080 Presidents' meeting so I asked District Governor Lesley if I could have five minutes on the agenda, to ask other Rotary clubs to join in on our support. Net result was a total contribution of \$16,675 CDN.

Then, members of Woodstock-Oxford, Doug Vincent and Peter Stam, stepped up and took the lead to get a global grant to augment our funds. Through their tremendous work, the total contribution to the project in East Gippsland came to \$95,190US!

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