

Voices of philanthropy



*David Gonski AC, Chair,
The Gonski Foundation.*

What are the rewards of philanthropic giving for you?

For some time now I have been very conscious that the life I lead as a merchant banker and company director is one which essentially could be categorised on an index of social impact as being low. It is a life of involvement but one which is very beneficial to me and not necessarily so to the community at large.

Philanthropic giving has allowed me to change this balance. This giving both in money and in time has given me a feeling that I am giving back to my community; that I am involved better in the world that surrounds me and finally, the effect of my work has a more enduring and sustainable effect.

What would you name as the biggest milestone in the last 30 years of the sector?

I have not been involved in the sector for the whole of the 30 years.

However, I believe that in the last eight years the biggest milestones that I have

seen are amendments to the Income Tax legislation allowing for the establishment of private philanthropic funds, the effectiveness of workplace giving and the carry forward of tax deductions arising from giving into subsequent years.

I believe also that the prosperity which Australia has had over the last 12 years has also been a significant factor in stimulating the sector.

Which philanthropic project that you have been involved in means the most to you?

I would reply that pretty well all of the philanthropic projects I have been involved with have meant a lot to me. If I am permitted I would single out three, namely:

- (a) The rebuilding of the Belvoir Street Theatre was in my view not only a desirable project but also one of the best carried out fundraising programs I have seen in the arts and for that matter elsewhere.
- (b) The second was the raising of monies to bring to fruition Arthur Boyd's dream at Bundanon. This was complex given the location of Bundanon but thanks to the generosity of so many ended up with a wonderful complex for children to have a Bundanon experience (many of these under privileged); artists to have a place to refine their craft on a longer term basis as artists in residence in a magnificent environment and careful storage

categorisation and general care of the art which Arthur Boyd kindly donated to Australia.

- (c) Thirdly perhaps the most exciting is the current philanthropic project for the establishment of an endowment to fund the Centre for Social Impact at the Universities of New South Wales, Melbourne and Swinburne. This would establish a centre where people can learn how to give, how to get and how to deal with gifts when given.

How would you like to see the sector develop in the next 30 years?

My hope is that both philanthropy and corporate social responsibility become inculcated into the thinking and planning of all individuals and corporations that have the resources to participate.

It should move from an option to a must.

The joy of giving and the satisfaction of being involved in communities should be available to all and widely enjoyed.

If the 'philanthropy fairy' granted you one wish to improve the charitable and philanthropic sector, what would you wish for?

General and unargued acceptance that philanthropy is a part of life, a commitment of those who are successful or wish to be and a joy sought and nurtured by all in a position to give.