

Christmas Message 2009 from the Abbeyfield Chairman

I was recently on an international telephone conference with Abbeyfielders from a number of places around the world, including Ireland, USA, United Kingdom and South Africa, and listening to the different dialects of those on the call it really brought home how our organisation has spread around the globe. Listening to people talking about the future of Abbeyfield made me realize that we are not working in isolation for the lonely, older people in our society who are seeking companionship, but others just like us are doing exactly the same thing and facing exactly the same problems and concerns that we are. The world is a changing place, Abbeyfield is endeavoring to keep up with the pace, and we are seeing big changes ahead especially with supported care/nursing home type houses. While we really don't want to go down that track right now, others have to face the fact that economics dictates what we can do and what we will do in the future. In a number of other countries care of the aged requires this type of care, and in Germany funding is only available for houses where all of the residents are over 75 years of age.

We must focus on the positives rather than the negatives, and while we have had a difficult year obtaining finance for starting other houses, we all congratulate the Nelson team on the start of the Mata Close complex and that residents are lining up to fill the suites. We do however have empty suites in other houses, and we hope that as the economic climate improves we will fill these in 2010. We also hope that the New Year will see the Westport house underway. We can only hope that funding will become available for us to begin more homes for the elderly outside of the main centers. We cannot ignore there is a need elsewhere - loneliness in old age is now being recognized as one of our major concerns and this is not restricted to large urban populations.

We are truly blessed by our volunteers who work so hard and give so much to make our organization function as it does, and it is an appropriate time of the year to recognize the huge service they provide. To you all, thank you so much from your Board members, and I am sure our residents echo this thanks as well.

Let me go back to the beginning. That International telephone call made me recognize that at this time of the year as we celebrate a summer Christmas other Abbeyfield homes will be celebrating in the cold of the Northern Hemisphere, but we are all celebrating for the same reason. May this remembrance of the birth of Christ overcome any loneliness and difficulties of this year as we share with our worldwide family in the joys, success, and happiness to come in the year ahead.

Merry Christmas to you all, and we look forward to a rewarding and fulfilling year in 2010, working together for Abbeyfield.

Peter Smale