



## **A Message From Our National Director RE: Covid-19**

### **- to all Toc H members in Australia**

Dear members of Toc H in Australia,

I am writing to you at a time when our country is experiencing something none of us have ever experienced before. Our Government and health authorities have made it clear that the actions we take at this time can save the lives of some of our most vulnerable people, as well as our own. I strongly urge everyone to listen to, and follow the directions of Government and health authorities in relation to practicing hygiene, social distancing, only leaving home for essential purposes, and all other recommendations.

As a people-focussed movement, we realise that these will be a difficult time for many people. Some will lose their jobs. Children will be staying home from school for some time, and families will need to adjust to home learning. And the elderly, many of whom already suffer from loneliness, will become more isolated for a time. Refugees and overseas students, who also need to be socially connected to learn English and build friendships, will also struggle.

Most of our projects involve face-to-face people contact, so for some time, these will not be possible. In Northern Region, our members can no longer visit the elderly, or conduct the social get togethers so popular at Coungeau House. ANZAC services are of course cancelled as are our major projects such as Camp Crystal and quite likely the Ekka Outing. The camp program at Victor Harbor in Toc H Southern Region, and the new and exciting projects initiated by Openlight, have been severely curtailed or postponed.

At this time we need to remember that Toc H, and its members, have been through difficult times before, including the great depression, and World War 2. Previous editions of our Link magazine have described how members have kept the spirit of Toc H alive in the most difficult of situations, including Changi Prison. We need to follow their example and focus on what we CAN do, not on what we can't do.

I strongly urge all Toc H members to do this. Get in contact with elderly friends who are house bound and no longer have the chance to meet together. If you can, help them to connect electronically; I recently helped an 80-year-old friend install WhatsApp on his phone, so he could talk to his son in America using video. WhatsApp is no more difficult than making a mobile phone call, and enables grandparents to video chat with their grandchildren and even read them bedtime stories! Call elderly friends who are in nursing homes that have been locked down. My wife and I have found that when we go for our exercise walk, we run into many friends and others who welcome a cheery hello, and even a short chat – from a safe distance! These are just a few ideas. There must be many ways to reach out to needy, lonely and marginalised people whilst still maintaining total compliance with the Covid-19 health guidelines. Please share your ideas!

For those of our members who are Christians, I encourage you to pray for many things. Please pray for our leaders and health authorities. Pray for our essential services workers, particularly nurses and doctors working on the front line treating Covid-19 patients, police, teachers and others. Pray for the medical researchers who are searching for an effective treatment and vaccine. Pray for other community groups and NGOs who are doing their best to help under difficult circumstances. Pray for the most vulnerable people – the homeless, the elderly, and those already undergoing significant health issues. And pray for our movement and all members of Toc H, that we will be strong, and can continue to make a difference. We will get through this!

Thank you for your continuing work for Toc H, and support. Feel free to contact me for a chat any time.

Yours in Toc H,

**Owen Nichols**

**National Director, Toc H Australia**