

ALL EARS



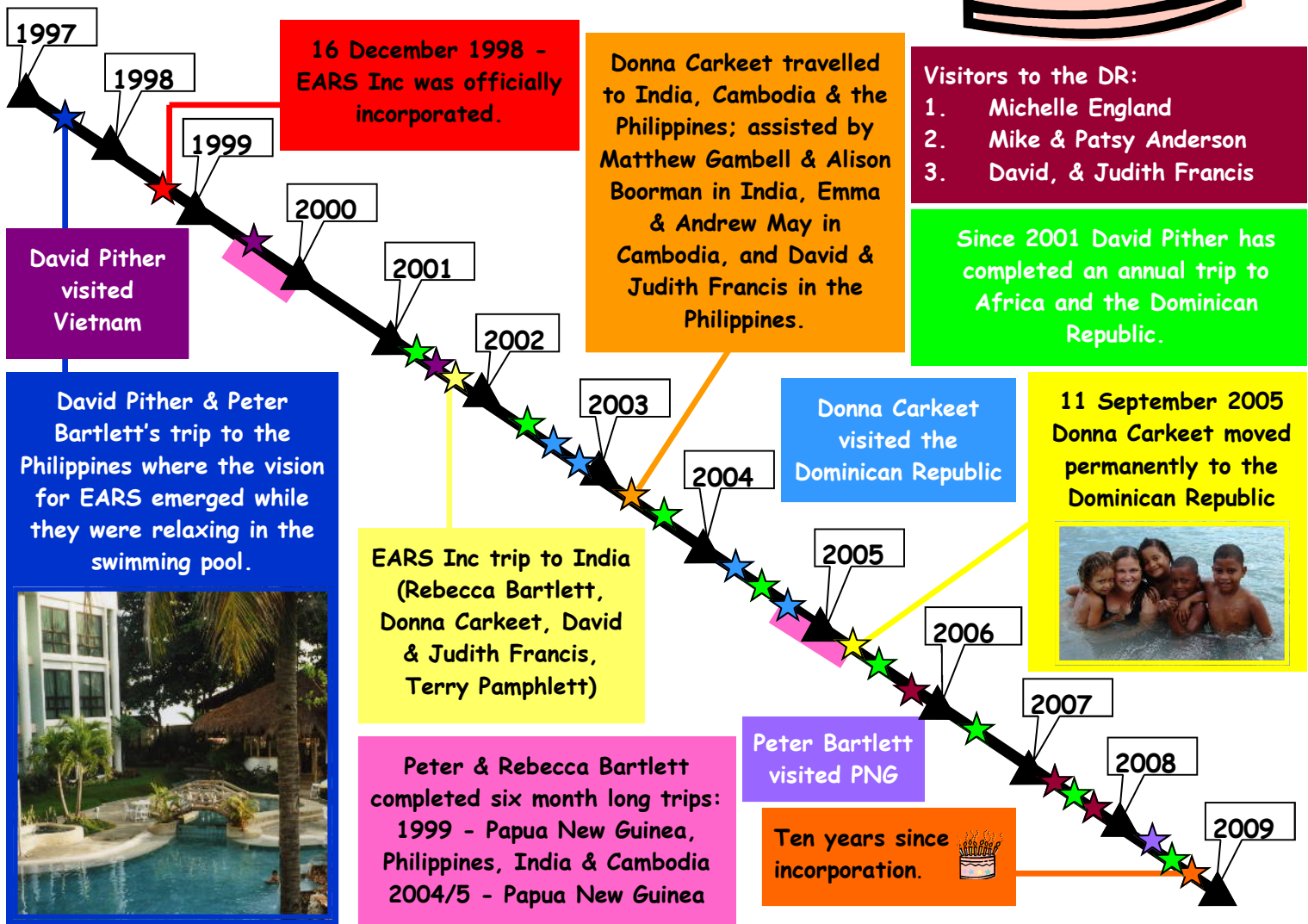
EARS inc.

Suite 302, 220 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000, Australia
Ph: (03) 9654 5511
Fax: (03) 9650 4862

No. 8

December 2008

IT'S OUR 10TH BIRTHDAY!!



FROM THE EDITOR.....

By JUDITH FRANCIS, SECRETARY



This is such an exciting issue for us as we look back on how this organisation was born and has developed over the last ten years. I have so many fantastic "EARS" memories and many of them have shaped the person who I am today as well as influenced my family. My husband has joined me for every trip and one of our fondest memories is celebrating our first wedding anniversary while sharing a sleeper compartment on an Indian train with three other women. Our one romantic gesture for the day was reaching across to hold hands just before going to sleep in our opposite top bunk beds. My daughter was two and a half when we travelled to the Dominican Republic to visit Donna and the project there. I remember her energetic display of running and dancing on our first day there after coming from a miserable Scottish summer and people calling us child-abusers in Spanish for letting a child play in the hot sun. Or when at the beach fair-skinned and blonde-haired Atira was surrounded by so many Dominican children and one asked Donna 'Will she go dark like us if she stays in the sun?' My involvement in EARS Inc comes from two of the many passions God has placed in my heart, audiology and to reach out and help those in need. I guess a better word for this last one is compassion.



ATIRA AT A DOMINICAN BEACH

In looking back over the last ten years of EARS Inc there are five people whom I would like to honour. These people have made significant sacrifices of time and finances to enable the work to be done and to get EARS to where it is today. The first four are the founding members: David & Sheryl Pither and Peter & Rebecca Bartlett. The fifth is Donna Carkeet who joined the organisation a few years later but whose willingness to serve has enabled us to have a permanent audiologist in the field and take our concept of what projects should look like and achieve to a whole new level. I have asked them to share with us their memories of how they became involved in EARS.

You will notice that what they share demonstrates that their involvement in EARS and humanitarian audiology work in general is motivated by their Christian faith and desire to serve their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. EARS Inc. is a Christian non-denominational organisation and the early trips we did had a significant Christian mission focus. I want to emphasize, however, that we do not single-mindedly only work with or help other Christians. Our desire is to help all those in need regardless of nationality, race, gender or religion. We are willing to work with all people from all walks of life. I also want to assure you that you do not need to share our Christian faith in order to contribute to the projects that we are involved with. We only ask that you come with a heart of compassion and love for others.

For those of you considering becoming involved in EARS it does come with one warning: doing cross-cultural audiology work is addictive because it is simply life-changing. This means it has a flow-on effect to your family and friends, work colleagues, and even just strangers you meet everyday. It changes how you view your world and other people, not to mention challenging those clinical skills. I think this is shown in an article included in this newsletter written by Emma May, one of our supporters who has done volunteer audiology work on one of the projects in Cambodia. I hope it inspires you as it has me.



DAVID FRANCIS TEACHING EARMOULD MANUFACTURING, BACOLOD, PHILIPPINES

DID YOU KNOW?

- ♣ EARS is keen to receive second hand hearing aids (behind-the-ear and body-worn aids) which are still in good working order, so that they can be refitted overseas. We also take hearing aids that appear dead but have useful parts (so as long as the dog nibbled it and didn't eat it we'll take it), including in-the-ear hearing aids.
- ♣ Donations of second hand equipment (audiometers, tympanometers, insertion gain machines, ultrasonic cleaners, otoscopes etc.) in good working order are also most highly valued and appreciated.

BEFORE EARS INC...

BY DAVID PITHER, PRESIDENT



As I was contemplating the ten year history of Ears Inc it came to mind that for me there were nearly ten years of charitable history in the field leading up to the formation of Ears Inc.

Vanuatu....

It all started back in 1989 when my family and I went on an outreach trip to Vanuatu with our church and I was asked to bring anything I could in the way of hearing aids, etc. I discovered that in Vanuatu and subsequently in most, if not all, small Pacific island countries there were no hearing testing services, clinics or hearing aids available. The Government of Vanuatu had no idea of the problems of ear disease or hearing loss, and less idea of what to do about it. I suggested I might help.

I embarked on a personally funded campaign to set up a clinic and "train" nurses in hearing assessment and hearing aid fitting, including manufacture of custom earmoulds. This comprised about seven trips to Vanuatu over five years, sponsoring two trainees to spend several months in Australia, and culminated in 1994 in running a three week ENT nursing course at the Vila Central Hospital for fourteen participants. As a result, the Australian and Vanuatu Governments drew up a bilateral agreement for an ENTsurgeon and audiometrist/audiologist to visit every six months. The medical superintendent at the time, Dr Olay Yinca Ajai drew up a detailed road map for the future which would entail setting up six clinics in the major island centres, with staffing levels and pay scales, budgets etc. The VENT program: Vanuatu Ear Nose and Throat. When established we were going to add an eye department to each clinic making it VENTE.

So what went wrong? The ENT's decided that instead of taking an audiometrist/audiologist with them they would rather take an anesthetist, despite Vanuatu having their own. The nurse that we trained in Australia spent the budget on travelling and drinking Carva and it was several years before she was finally sacked. After the three week course in 1994 I never went back. I had invested thousands of dollars, months of my time and a lot of equipment into the program. The final straw was when a funding agreement I had instigated was denied me.



VANUATU STUDENTS

The main clinic in Vanuatu continued to see 30 - 40 patients a day, but hearing aid fitting largely ceased. It was another six years before the ENT's finally woke up and admitted their mistake. Audiologists are now visiting Vanuatu regularly and hearing aid fitting has resumed. Vanuatu proved to be a valuable experience for me none-the-less. It proved that people should not be taken out of their culture for purposes of training. I have seen many people in the years since make that same mistake. The experience also gave me a semblance of understanding on how to tackle bureaucrats.

Vietnam...

In 1995 I made several trips to Vietnam, establishing an earmould lab in a Deaf School outside Ho Chi Minh city. This led to trips to Hanoi and Da Nang where Australian ENT surgeons were working and later, I think 1998, to run a five day Earmould manufacturing workshop in Ho Chi Minh city with 24 participants sponsored by Kommittee Twee of the Netherlands. Each participating Deaf School received a complete earmould lab. You must understand that until this time staff from the two ENT centres in the country would visit each of the 40+ deaf schools at the start of each year and take impressions of the children's ears. Over the rest of the year gradually earmoulds would be sent to the schools, the centres only making three or four earmoulds a day. Now impression material shrinks in the heat and children grow. Not a good combination. Most of the moulds fitted badly if at all. Now the deaf schools could make and fit earmoulds themselves within two hours of taking the impressions. This radically changed the nature of hearing aid fitting across the nation of Vietnam.



CAMBODIA EARMOULD LAB



VIETNAM SOLDERING COURSE

My last visit to Vietnam was 2001 where I ran a five day Hearing Aid Repair workshop for 27 participants sponsored by Caritas of Switzerland. Each participant received a full kit of equipment.

Philippines.....

During this time one of my clients in Melbourne sponsored three trips to the Philippines, which lead to a trip to the Philippines with Peter Bartlett, where the vision for the formation of Ears Inc emerged.

Cambodia.....

The same client sponsored two ladies from Cambodia to come to Danang in Vietnam to learn how to make earmoulds, which of course led to my visiting Cambodia on three occasions and setting up a clinic there for the Sisters of Mercy. Prior to that no hearing aid services were available in that country. I think there are now three or four clinics in several cities. One of the ENT's who I had worked with in Vietnam visited Cambodia with me and has subsequently been training surgeons there. A number of Ears Inc audiologists have spent time in Cambodia. My friend Terry Ryan visits on a regular basis.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.....

♦ **Web Designer:** Our new website has hit a snag and we need a web designer willing to invest a little time into finishing it so it is ready to go online.

♦ **Marketing Director/Co-ordinator:** Having someone in this role is essential to EARS to continue growing and taking on more projects. We need someone able to create a marketing strategy appropriate for EARS fundraising and to co-ordinate volunteers involved in fundraising activities.

♦ **Administration:** We need volunteers to man our new office in Balwyn, Melbourne. We also need someone to put together an information and co-ordination package for our field volunteers.

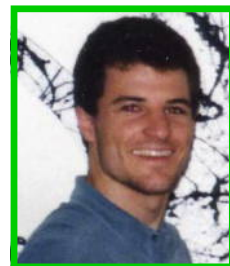
♦ **Spanish-speaking Audiologist:** In mid-2009 Donna needs to spend three months back in Australia so we are looking for an Audiologist able to oversee the project and university course in the Dominican Republic. Spanish language skills would be a huge advantage.

♦ **Audiologist/Audiometrists** are needed in the Dominican Republic for ABR training, help in general clinic organisation, supervision of students, school screening projects, and beginning of community outreach programs. There are also many other locations requiring an audiologist/audiometrist to support them in their hearing clinic or mould making facility. Further onsite training is vital to ensure the skills of those already trained are maintained and improved upon.

♦ **Hearing Aid Technicians:** We require technicians to travel and teach in many of our current projects. Of particular interest are technicians with access to a mobile audiometer calibration set. We also require technicians to check equipment in Australia before sending it overseas.

To register interest as a volunteer please phone the EARS Inc office on +61 3 9654 5511 or contact Judith Francis at j.r.francis@bigpond.com.

A VERY LONG SWIM... By PETER BARTLETT, VICE-PRESIDENT



A phone call out of the blue from David Pither inviting me to the Philippines with a short-term mission team was all the encouragement I needed to immediately get on board. After three and a half years practising as an audiologist and looking for such an opportunity to use my clinical skills, I knew the time was right. What I didn't know was that David and I were the clinical team as far as the hearing clinic was concerned, although there were many local healthworkers and nurses involved. The plan was to have clinics running during the days and evangelistic rallies at night in the Mindinao cities of Surigao, Butuan and Davao.

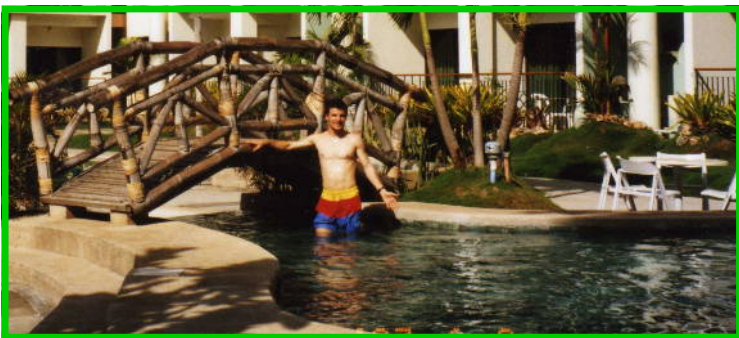
As so often occurs with short-term mission clinics, there were large numbers of people to see, many of whom had complicated ear problems requiring medical or surgical intervention or extensive hearing rehabilitation. We worked long and hard, and tried our best, but knew that we didn't have the resources to meet the presenting needs. We prayed for those in desperate need. I searched God's word to explore the power of healing, and was disappointed when we didn't immediately witness healing for those seeking a miracle. At the same time though, we were able to test, advise and help many who attended the clinic.



TV INTERVIEW IN BUTUAN CITY,
PHILIPPINES

Instead of proceeding on with the team to Davao, David and I were invited by a Korean pastor, who we happened to come in contact with in Butuan City, to visit his church and mission work in Surigao City on the north coast. He offered to accommodate us at a lovely hotel and fly us back to Davao to rejoin the team so we could travel with him. As a result of having the night at the hotel, David and I had the opportunity to take a swim and wind down from the heavy schedule. As we waded in the warmed water, the darkness of night eclipsed the outside world and allowed us to acknowledge the great need of the deaf and hearing impaired in developing countries, and to dream about the possibilities of utilising resources and expertise from Australia and internationally.

In some ways, the optimism and potential birthed during a couple of hours in a lagoon-like hotel swimming pool in Surigao City in 1997 was the beginning of the formation of our now ten-year-old EARS Incorporated which was officially recognised as a non-government aid organisation in December 1999. Our long swim is also an ongoing reminder to me of the immense value in taking time out of a busy schedule and heavy workload to get perspective on my surroundings and open my eyes to the possibilities with God's leading. I pray you too will take some time to reflect and explore. You never know what things of great value might be birthed.



PETER IN THE POOL AT CAGAYAN DE ORO, PHILIPPINES
BIRTH PLACE OF EARS INC.

For those reading for the first time.....

EARS Inc. is an Australian based interdenominational Christian organisation comprising audiologists, audiometrists and allied health professionals. EARS Inc. is dedicated to serving, and addressing the needs of those affected by hearing impairment and deafness, who live in the developing world, irrespective of nationality, race, gender or religion.

The work of EARS Inc. aims to provide ongoing training and support to local workers or health clinics, hospitals, deaf schools and mission groups in developing countries, to empower them with the necessary skills and equipment to rehabilitate people with hearing loss. The aim is to help people help themselves and others.

A NEW FOCUS.....

By DAVID PITHER, PRESIDENT

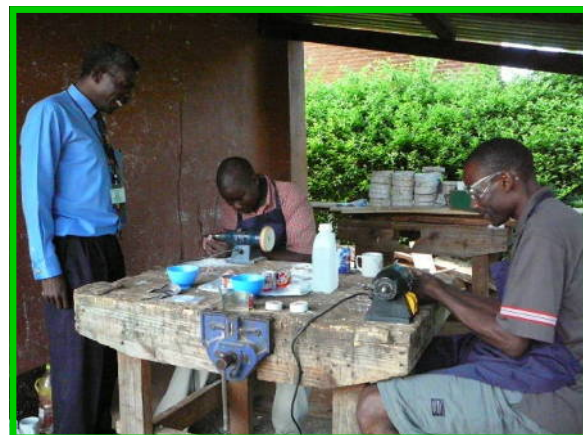
In 2001 I tackled two new parts of the globe: Southern Africa and Central America.

Botswana and Zambia....



DAVID PITHER IN ZIMBABWE

I became a member of the Board of a charity in Botswana called Godisa which started manufacture of Solar Charged hearing aids and the solar chargers for them. I had been advising them for about a year prior to this via email. I visit every year in March for a Board meeting and each year run an earmould manufacturing workshop. The first in Botswana included participants from Namibia and Zimbabwe, but in subsequent years I tacked on side trips to run workshops in Ethiopia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and this year Malawi.



EARMOULD LAB IN MALAWI

Dominican Republic.....

In the Dominican Republic in 2001 I started a project which, with the exception of this year, I have visited yearly. Donna Carkeet followed in my footsteps early in the project and has turned this into something quite spectacular.

Final word.....

These are just some of the 40 odd trips I have made to these and other places. There have been many more by our Ears Inc members to countries including India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Fiji. In the future we expect to have a big impact on Fiji, so get ready. We have also sent equipment to places we haven't visited such as Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Egypt and Jordan.



IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

So, ten years on at Ears Inc, we need:

- ◆ more members;
- ◆ administrative volunteers, particularly to get our "new" office in North Balwyn, Melbourne up and running;
- ◆ people to do fundraising;
- ◆ BUT mostly we need more people to go out into the field.



TOUCH THE NEED AND BE TOUCHED - YOUR LIFE WILL NEVER BE MUNDANE!

Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

THE EARS INC WEBSITE IS WWW.EARSINC.ORG

MY REFLECTIONS ON CAMBODIA.....

By EMMA MAY, VOLUNTEER AUDIOLOGIST



There are days in your life that you will never forget after which you never look at life the same way again.

In January 2003 my husband and I went to Cambodia to visit relatives and to assist Donna Carkeet in training a group of health workers in basic audiometry. One of the people we met during the training was a young man called Piseth. Piseth was a small man with broken English but there was a great warmth about him and he endeared himself to us right away.



EMMA WITH THE CAMBODIAN HEALTH WORKERS

Each day before we started the training, Piseth would travel to the clinic he worked at as a nurse. The unique feature of this clinic was that it was located amongst the poorest of the poor - right beside a rubbish dump in Phnom Penh. There he would dress the wounds which the adults and children sustained as they scrounged for items of rubbish that might be able to be eaten or sold. The main ailments people sustained were wounds on the hands, feet and legs which often became infected. Respiratory infections were common as well, from the smoke that was permanently smouldering on the dump.

The aid agency he worked for ran a large school for the children from the rubbish dump. They would gather up the children living beside the dump in the morning and then walk them to the school, shower and dress them in uniforms, and train them in skills and trades that would give them a chance at a better future. Ironically, for many of these children, this is exactly what their parents had hoped for when they'd made the move from the country to the city, not realising that jobs were hard to come by for unskilled country people and they then had no money left to return to where they'd come from.



PISETH

At dawn one morning, Piseth picked us up on the back of his motorbike and took us to have a look at the program. We walked over the dump smelling the putrid smell of rotting rubbish combined with smoke and we watched people flock to the rubbish truck to be first in line in order to survey the latest load of waste. Working in such a place, it would be easy to become desensitized to the overwhelming poverty and allow compassion to die. But not Piseth. Piseth's eyes filled with tears as he saw a small child climbing amongst the rubble. "He should be at school" he said, then yelled to the boy, "Get down from there, it's dangerous!"

As a Westerner going on a trip like this, you always assume that you have

much to teach people. However, as is often the case, we learnt so much more from Piseth than we were able to teach him. We will never forget that life-changing day because of the compassion of Piseth for his people.



RUBBISH DUMP IN PHNOM PENH WHERE PISETH WORKED

DONNA'S STORY.....

By DONNA CARKEET, BOARD MEMBER
& PERMANENT PROJECT AUDIOLOGIST



As I sit here I cannot actually work out how I ended up so far from home and working in a place I had never heard of developing a university program in a developing country. The steps were small but significant. I believe that it started with the initial training session for my first trip with EARS Inc in 2001. I was a student in Bible College at the time and working as an audiologist part time for Australian hearing. I had gone part time as I felt like I wanted to study for a while and see what God had for me. I love audiology and always have. I am a bit of a freak that way. I had enjoyed the whole career so was not unsatisfied in that respect.

I had volunteered to go on a short term mission to India as it sounded interesting, a trip with a small group called EARS Inc I had known only through emails. As I went I was very nervous to have volunteered to travel with an unknown group. We shared a great afternoon at the training session and it was here I first heard of the need for a paediatric audiologist in the Dominican Republic. I do not know why but this stayed in my mind. We went to India and, on a night where we were out in the streets, I was looking at all the faces. We had done a full and exhausting project day and then gone to a church to preach on the roof of a house. As we were walking I thought I felt more like a complete version of myself than ever before. The sides of my life had come together in this work - the career, the ministry, my personality, and all my passions for travel and people. I knew then and there I would talk to this organisation about dedicating a year to projects in different countries and go to the Dominican Republic even though I didn't really know where that was.



DONNA WITH SOME OF THE DOMINICAN AUDIOLOGY STUDENTS

In 2002 I left home to spend three months in the Dominican Republic, followed by work in the UK to raise more funds then go to India, Cambodia and the Philippines. While away I decided to squeeze in another trip back to the Dominican as I just couldn't stay away. I returned late that year to check on the already growing project. It was during this trip that I met William Hunter, a director of Medical Ministries International, who in a half an hour conversation with me shared some ideas about an audiology school in the Dominican Republic and setting up a more long term project. From that time on that has been my prayer and my goal. I guess God works in the small steps of faith that we are able to make. I am not sure I am ready even now for all he has in front of us here but I know that he is here and was here planning this before I even knew where this country was.

EARS Inc Membership

Title: _____ Name: _____
 Address: _____

 State: _____ Postcode: _____
 Ph: () _____
 Fax: () _____
 Email: _____

- I would like to receive regular newsletters.
- I would like to be a prayer supporter.
- I would like to be a financial supporter of EARS Inc.
- I would like to support Donna Carkeet in the DR on a monthly basis.

I PREFER TO GIVE BY:

- Cheque/money order (tax deductible donations must be made payable to Ears Inc. Overseas Aid Fund)
- I will arrange for direct debit with my bank. Please provide me with the EARS Inc. account details.
- Please debit my credit card (Note: this is not for tax deductible donations, please contact EARS Inc. if you would like to make a tax deductible donation):

Bankcard / MasterCard / Visa

Card Number: _____

Expiry Date on the card: ____/____

Signature: _____

This payment / authorisation is for: \$ _____ as a
 single gift or monthly payment.