



Wrap with Love

The late Sonia Gidley-King (Founder) & Lorraine Sutton (Chairperson)
An interview with Maggie Hamilton

Each year millions of people across the planet suffer extreme cold through poverty, war, earthquakes, homelessness, climate issues and more.



'We've learned a lot about humanity over the years.'

Answering the call, Australian charity *Wrap with Love*, provides knitted squares made into blankets for those in need.

This last year alone *Wrap with Love* has sent thousands of blankets to Tonga, Lebanon and Armenia, Syria, the Solomons and the Ukraine, to local Afghani refugees and our own indigenous people.

'*Wrap with Love* is a community,' says Lorraine Sutton, chair of this vibrant charity. With the help of volunteers of all ages, and with a clear non-denominational, non-racist, non-political stance, *Wrap with Love* helps provide as many people as possible with wraps to combat hypothermia.

The idea of knitted blankets came to Sydney's Sonia Gidley-King, while watching a program on war-torn Mozambique. Someone clearly needed to do something. Then Sonia realised that perhaps she was that someone. With some leftover wool, Sonia knitted a square, realising that if she were to keep going, she could knit a warm blanket. Rallying former Kincoppal schoolmates, Sonia soon had others busy knitting. Within a month 38 wraps had been completed.

The next hurdle was how to get the wraps to their destination,' Lorraine explains. 'Sonia started calling aid agencies.

Everyone said transport was too expensive – an ongoing issue for charities – especially since COVID. Weeks later, Community Aid Abroad was shipping second-hand machinery to Mozambique.

The wraps ended up as packaging.



'A cold humanity is our concern, people caring about other people.'

Since then, Australian victims of floods and fire, refugees and the homeless, and the indigenous communities of the APY Lands (between Adelaide and Darwin) have also been some of the many local recipients of these colourful blankets.

'We've learned a lot about humanity [over the years],' reflects Lorraine, whose volunteering with *Wrap with Love* began two decades ago after recovering from breast cancer.

'Recently we got a note from a woman living in a caravan with her two children after their home was inundated in the Lismore floods. She sent us a photo of her kids wrapped up in our blankets. She was so moved to have this help, and to think each of these blankets could each have been made by up to 28 people.'

'Over the last 30 years we've sent just under half a million wraps to numerous countries, and an increasing number of kids are now knitting or crocheting wraps as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award.'

While many squares are created at home, knitters and crocheters of all ages and backgrounds now gather in libraries, school halls, church halls and in other venues to knit together.

'Recently we had a group of 16 girls from the Shoalhaven,' Lorraine tells. 'Their Islamic teacher hired a bus to bring the girls, many of whom were Muslim, to visit us and see what happened to their Wraps.'

'Each wrap is literally a labour of love,' says Lorraine adding, 'It's not the number of squares that someone produces, but the fact that they have contributed one or more squares. Just one square provides one twenty-eighth of warmth, and collectively, twenty-eight assembled squares create one whole warm and sheltering wrap.'

Further details: www.wrapwithlove.org

Creative Team - Heart of Australia (26 October):
Anatole Kononewsky, Maggie Hamilton, Glen Barry,
Chris Frost, Chris Hooper, Tiriki Onus, Bronny Lane

