



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Saturday 13th August, 2005**

**FREEMASONS & CATHOLIC ORDER  
WORK TOGETHER FOR TSUNAMI VICTIMS**

The Freemasons of Australia and New Zealand have pooled resources to help build a \$750,000 orphanage and vocational training centre in Sri Lanka operated by the Roman Catholic order of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

Some 600 orphans left homeless by the Tsunami will be housed in the project, which will also leave a long term legacy of education and care for the residents of Elpitiya, on Sri Lanka's SW coast.

Over half of the project cost will be met by the Freemasons' donation of \$450,000. **Of this figure, Freemasons in South Australia and Northern Territory raised over \$72,000.**

140 lives were lost and 5,000 people were left homeless when the tsunami tidal wave struck Elpitiya on December 26 and destroyed much of the area's main industry, fishing.

"Within days of the tsunami, the Freemasons of Australia and New Zealand launched an appeal among our 61,000 members; but adopted a "wait and see" approach before deciding where the funds raised should go," Grand Master of South Australia & Northern Territory, Rob Casson said.

"The orphanage at Elpitiya, operated by the Roman Catholic order of the Salesians of Don Bosco, was chosen because 100 per cent of the funds raised can be guaranteed to be applied to the project" he said.

"The Salesians had already raised enough money to fund a land purchase and partial construction of the orphanage," the head of Australia's Salesians order of Don Bosco, Father Ian Murdoch said.

"The Freemasons' most unexpected donation of \$450,000 means the entire project can be completed many years ahead of schedule and leave a lasting legacy of care, training and education in this underprivileged part of the world," he said.

The wing housing the Vocational Training Centre is to be dedicated to the Freemasons of Australia and New Zealand.

The Australasian Freemasons donate millions each year to charities, community initiatives, educational institutions, hospitals and organisations dealing with the underprivileged, irrespective of whether they are connected to Freemasonry, and irrespective of colour, nationality or religious persuasions.

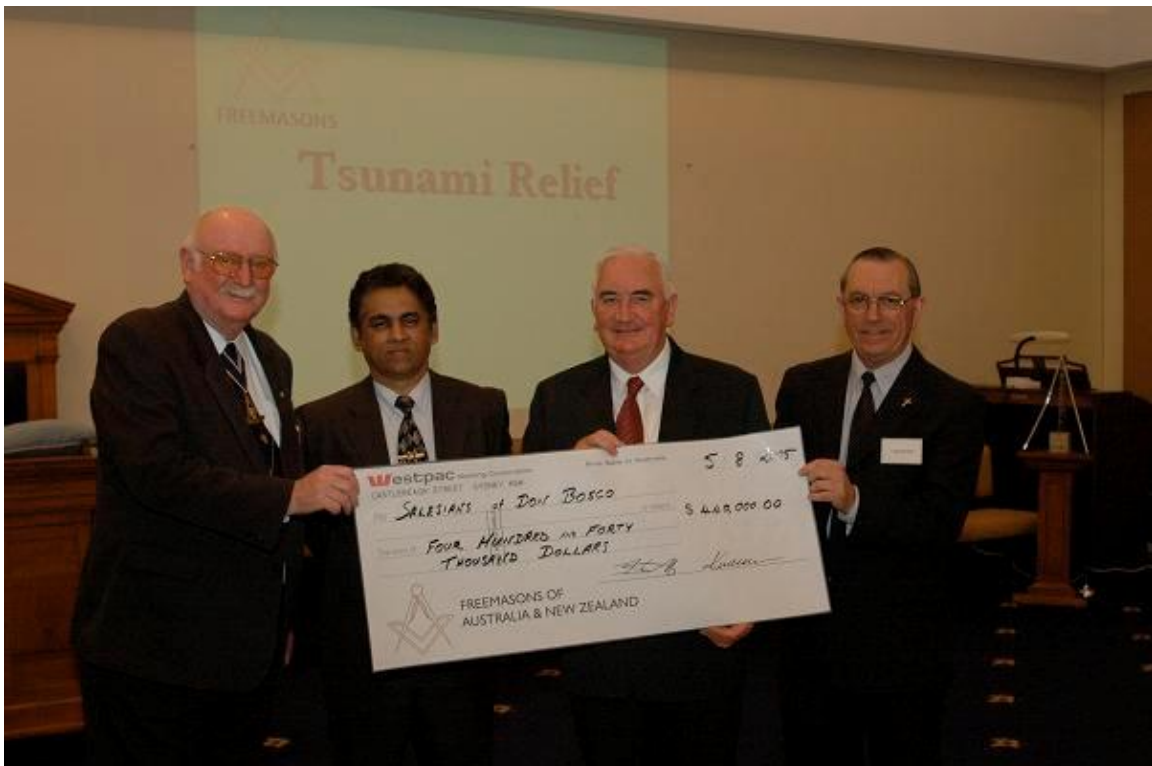
This project is the latest in a series of joint ventures between Freemasons and the Salesians, which included the donation of around \$1.5 million dollars worth of tools to East Timor in 2003.

The Salesians are a Catholic Religious Congregation with an extensive international network in developing countries. Today there are more than 1000 Salesians (priests, brothers, sisters) working in tsunami – affected regions of Sri Lanka, Southern India and Thailand. Some 95% of Salesians are indigenous to the countries mentioned.

The Tsunami Aid Co-ordinating Committee overseeing projects throughout Tsunami affected countries is based at the Salesian Head Office in Rome.

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#### ISSUED ON BEHALF OF FREEMASONS OF AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND



**Accompanying photograph: Grand Master of SA & NT Rob Casson presents Tsunami cheque for \$440,000 to Sri Lankan Acting Consul-General Wasantha Senanayke, with Salesian Brothers Michael Lynch and Frank Batagnolli.**

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