

## Cuba

The initial visit to Cuba was stimulated by contact between the Cuban Children's Fund of APHEDA (the outreach organization of the Australian Council of Trade Unions) and motivated by the late Mr Tasnor Bull. Two visits were undertaken in 2003, with a focus on Paediatric Urology, at the William Soler Hospital. particularly on patients requiring bladder exstrophy redo surgery. The funding for the first three trips has been provided by a combination of Northcote Rotary Club, the Cuban Children's fund committee, and generous donations from various companies, orchestrated through the Kind Cuts for Kids Foundation. The third visit was funded by the Kind Cuts for Kids Foundation, the Ministry of Health in Cuba, and by extending a visit to the Chilean Urology Society annual meeting. The visit in 2005 was again funded by a combination of the Ministry of Health, who funded the accommodation in Havana, the Urology Society of Cuba supporting the visit to their annual scientific meeting, and the Kind Cuts for kids Foundation which provided the airfares for the surgeon and nurse. The latter monies came from donations following a presentation organized by the Preston Rotary Club. Various companies also supported the visit, including Ansell, Qantas, Bard and Tyco International. The fifth visit, in 2006, was funded in a similar way to the 2005 trip with the photographer (Charmion Phillips) providing not only her time, but her own funding.

During the visit in 2006, all clinics and surgery were conducted at the William Soler Hospital, but with the involvement of many surgeons. Those from William Soler included the Head of the Paediatric Urology Unit, Professor Rosario Calveat, Maria del Carmen Castro, Itsel Vela, Amarylis Santfiel, and Guerra-Rodriguez Marlen. A Plastic Surgeon, General Paediatric Surgeons, Urology trainees, a Paediatric Tumour surgeon and a Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon also participated. Also Professor Emilio Cordie Jackson and Dr Barbara Mora Casaco came from Havana Central Paediatric Hospital, and Dr Fermin Fernandez Diaz, Dr Rodrigues, Carlos and their registrar visited from Juan Manuel Márquez Children's Hospital. Despite the transportation difficulties most of these people were involved in the surgical program on most days. The importance of the training program was highlighted by a Paediatric Urologist from a peripheral centre spending a week at the William Soler Hospital.

During the 5 visits a total of 186 consultations have taken place and 218 operations on 69 patients have been performed. Most patients have had long operations with multiple procedures under the one anaesthetic, with 30 having major reconstruction for the abnormality of bladder exstrophy.