

Tick for tiger

By Russell Bennett

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Students at Olinda Primary School are making their mark on the world. 66233 Picture: Donna Oates

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BY HELL or high water, an Olinda not-for-profit group is stopping at nothing to help the plight of the mighty tiger.

Koala Spirit has partnered with Olinda Primary School to decorate and fit-out a 40-foot shipping container to transport to the Ranthambore National Park Tiger Watch Reserve, around 140 kilometres from Jaipur in India, where it will be used as an environment education centre.

Pauline Crosbie, a former school teacher, started Koala Spirit after the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires “to support projects that nurture and sustain life”.

It was created in support of disadvantaged children and threatened animals around the world.

Ms Crosbie was asked to help the tiger's plight by Peter Gorgievski, CEO of welfare organisation the Global Dialogue Foundation, after she sent care shipments to West Africa to help young victims of the Liberian war.

“He visited the sanctuary and fell in love with the tigers and the work Tiger Watch was doing to reform poachers,” she said.

“This is amazing work and proves the huge difference that can be made just through education.”

Mr Gorgievski invited Koala Spirit to send a shipment to India to support the tigers.

Ms Crosbie then liaised with shipping companies, sorting out the massive logistic issues of getting a converted shipping container over to the sub-continent.

The container has made stops at Collingwood Farm, Mornington Peninsula Youth Services and Federation Square over the past two years in an effort to create awareness and encourage people to commit to programs which help endangered species.

Primary school students in Eltham started to the task of painting the outside of the container and youngsters around the state have continued from where they left off.

Olinda primary schoolers have helped fit the container out in a jungle theme and Ms Crosbie has invited the wider hills community to get on board. “The kids have done the design of education centre and kitchen space,” she said.

“Now we're looking for looking for skilled residents on Mt Dandenong to chip in, impart their knowledge on to the kids and help the tiger.”

Ms Crosbie said her group wasn't looking for financial handouts.

“Money is a vehicle to make things happen but we're creating change – really involving people in the process,” she said.

Ms Crosbie called on electricians, cleaners, artists, woodworkers, metal workers, knitters, and rug makers to all lend a hand so the container-cum-environment centre would be complete on arrival in India.

“People could do some tile work for our kitchen, make a light or a rug, donate books – just anything to help,” she said.

Ms Crosbie said she Koala Spirit was looking for donations of new, up-to-date computers to install into the container and form an interactive part of the education centre.

“We're after really good technology so we can communicate back and forth with the people over in India,” she said.

“But the technology has to be spot on and we'd ideally like black computers so they could match our tiger theme.”

Ms Crosbie said her first shipment to Liberia took 12 months to complete but Tiger Watch would have its new education centre in October.