

Hands-on Aussie Geraldine Cox cares for hundreds of Cambodian orphans

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Cheryl Critchely
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GERALDINE Cox reckons she'd be arrested if she ran her orphanages in Australia.

Ms Cox, 63, who runs [Sunrise Children's Villages](#) in Cambodia, loves hugging and kissing the kids.

"With all the political correctness . . . I'd be in prison in a week," she laughs. "I'm kissing, touching, fondling, napping with . . . the kids all the time.

"My kids need to be touched, they need to be caressed and I think it's a great sadness the way the world is going now that you can't be loving towards children."

Unable to have biological children, Ms Cox, who was born in Adelaide, gave up a life of diplomatic and corporate hedonism in the mid-1990s to establish her homes.

The feisty redhead, now called Mum by hundreds of children, is back in Australia for her annual fundraising pilgrimage.

She needs \$80,000 a month to run two orphanages, so she headlines functions such as [Melbourne's Business Chicks](#) fundraising breakfast.

A third orphanage is being built thanks to \$500,000 from Australian company [Computershare](#), which also donated a bus. Another \$600,000 is needed for the new home, which will house 200 orphans.

On this trip Ms Cox has the added worry of the global finance crisis.

"We hold our money here in Australia and it's sent up in US dollars," she says. "I've got to raise about twice as much . . . to meet the falling dollar."

Ms Cox prides herself on the fact that Sunrise, which has no government funding, spends just 10 cents in the dollar on administration.

A \$40 monthly sponsorship covers a child's food. Each child needs six \$40 sponsors to cover food, clothing, education, medical care, English, computer lessons and maintenance.

Many of Ms Cox's charges now have good jobs and some have won tertiary scholarships in Australia.

Other cases she sees and hears about are horrific.

"I get kids that come to me through abandonment, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, cruelty; they've been trafficked into prostitution and slave labour," she says. "And two of my girls have been victims of acid burn attacks.

"In one case the mother was having an affair and the wife found out and she poured battery acid all over the mother and her sleeping daughter."

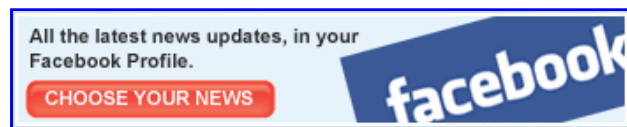
Geraldine Cox will speak at a Business Chicks Breakfast on Thursday, October 30, from 7-9am at Peninsula, Shed 14 Central Pier, 161 Harbour Esplanade, Docklands.

Tickets: Guests \$81, Members \$70, Table of 10: \$700.

Book and see details of other talks at www.businesschicks.com.au or call (02) 8021 4143.

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