

# THE AUSTRALIAN

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## Time for Australians to give something back

- The Australian
- 6:12PM May 6, 2018



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Competition for the charity dollar is intense. As any fundraiser can tell you, there are a million good causes. Every disease has a charity working to raise money into researching its origins and finding a cure. These charities not only have to keep battling each other for a dollar but they compete with the arts and sport. Benefactors in the arts support opera, ballet, theatre and museums displaying everything from dinosaurs to trains. Donors to the arts tend to be from the mega rich. When it comes to sport, the majors like rugby league, AFL, soccer have truly broad support bases. They hunt major sponsors as well as memberships for the masses. In summer cricket and tennis pinch huge chunks of sponsor dollars. Then there are the Salvation Army, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Smith Family, St Vincent de Paul and the Red Cross. Then, apart from all that, everybody's local church, school or hospital are out chasing a quid as well.

On Saturday night my family and I attended a kids Denim Disco in support of the Children's Medical Research Institute, a venerable 60-year-old institution attached to the Westmead Children's Hospital in Sydney. A band played, the kids and some of the mums danced and the parents gave. No doubt hundreds of similar fundraisers would have been held at the same time all over the country. Some of those other events would have been supporting a political party or candidate. Politics, elections and bi-elections suck up an awful lot of money. Some might be bold enough to suggest that money could be better spent on more deserving causes.

There has been criticism of the very wealthy in this country for not having a tradition of philanthropy like that seen in the United States and Europe. For instance, Bill Gates is committed to giving away at least half of his massive fortune. He and his wife devote most of their time to deciding where, how and to whom they disperse their billions. I am never too

sure about suggestions our mega rich are lousier and meaner than their counterparts in other countries. I know from working for Kerry Packer for many years that he gave away vast sums in donations on the assurance of total anonymity from the charities concerned. Kerry was never Robinson Crusoe in that respect.

Another friend of mine who has somewhere near as much money as God, funds an enormously successful program for ice addicts and would be furious if I named him here. Perhaps some of the focus should go back to getting \$5 and \$10 donations from ordinary citizens. That is much harder work but as a nation I have no doubt we could all dig a litter deeper.

I chose to help the Children's Hospitals in Sydney, Westmead and Prince or Wales at Randwick because there can be nothing crueller or more unfair than really ill children. Kids with cancer will always warrant support. On Saturday night, a young mother and her daughter spoke at the Denim Disco. As a little baby that child had been finally diagnosed with leukaemia. By the time they finished there was not a dry eye in the room. This little girl was brought from South Africa to Westmead because there, a cure could be offered. "Jeans for Genes" is their property and it is beginning to get much more public attention.

For the rest of those incredibly worthy causes I can do no more than to say for those people lucky enough to live in Australia, we should put something back. Whether you can donate time or money, do something to show your gratitude.