

TREKKING FOR CHILDREN

A YOUNG Dutch couple travelling around Australia in support of needy children pedalled into Canberra early this month to meet the Commissioner, Mr Peter McAulay.

The couple, Ciska Keerssemeeckers and Michael Verhage, both 28, migrated to Australia 16 months ago and are now devoting a year of their lives to raise awareness in the Foster Parents Plan, which fosters thousands of needy children in the world.

The Commissioner and Mrs McAulay sponsor two children under the Plan. Their support began in the early 1980s.

"We first became interested in the Foster Parents Plan in Darwin 8 years ago," Mr McAulay said. "My wife and I thought we should be doing something in charitable work, specifically in the care of children."

Correspond

"We had the impression that the administrative overhead costs were unproportionately high in relation to some schemes. It was important to us to see that the money was going to the cause for which it was donated."

"It seemed obvious that most of the money contributed to the Foster Parents Plan got through," he said.

Of their two sponsored children, one, a 12-year-old girl, lives in the Philippines. The other, also a girl, 11 years of age, is in Ethiopia.

"We have not been able to visit them, but occasionally we correspond," the Commissioner said. "It is preferred that donors do not identify too closely with the children."

DAVID LACEY

The death occurred on 11 May of Constable David Edward Lacey, age 26. He died from a heart attack after suffering from a flu virus.

Constable Lacey joined the AFP in 1983 and after completing General Duties, began the pursuit motorcycle course in October 1984, following it with the car course in February 1987.

He passed the Stage 5 Senior Constable course in November 1988 and completed the Stage 4 Investigators Course the week before his death.



Commissioner Peter McAulay wishes visiting "Pedalling for People" cyclists Ciska Keerssemeeckers and Michael Verhage well in their travels.

Mr McAulay said the aspect of the Plan which appealed to them was the fact that a certain percentage of the annual contribution went to the family and their village in needy areas.

"In each village, a committee of local people is formed to see the money is spent on the most needy projects," he said.

"People in these areas exist on an annual income equivalent to as little as \$50 a year."

"In these circumstances, the moderate annual donation is a small sum in comparison with the future benefits provided for them."

Ciska and Michael discussed their own involvement in the Plan with the Commissioner.

"We have an 18-months-old boy in Bolivia whom we sponsor," Ciska said. "Our interest was aroused in Holland, where one in 20 families sponsor children under the Plan. It is all done on a voluntary basis."

Since leaving their home at Vliissingen, in Southern Holland, they

have travelled around South America, Asia and Europe in support of the Plan.

"By concentrating on such things as health and education and always involving the people in deciding what is best for them, the Plan makes real changes to people's lives and to children's futures," Ciska said.

The two travellers are funding their journey from their own savings, paying for bicycles, equipment and expenses along the way.

They set off from Adelaide on 27 February and have since travelled 3300 of the 17,000kms they hope to cover around Australia. They visited Melbourne, Tasmania and from Canberra were going to Sydney, then North Queensland. They hoped to be in Darwin by August.

"We are glad of what we are doing and hope it will open doors for needy people," Michael said.

Mr McAulay wished them well in their "Pedalling for People" travels.