

Intrepid lawyers take on global adventure to help street kids



By Darise Ogden

WHEN RUSSELL McVeagh solicitor Rob Gray and Buddle Findlay solicitor Rob Climo returned to New Zealand from Denmark early last year, they started to plan their next big adventure. In April 2010, along with three friends (a school teacher, a mechanic, and a business strategist), Gray and Climo are planning to ride from Vladivostok to London – a journey of 25,000 kilometres.

The trip will take them through Russia, Siberia, Mongolia, all the Central Asian Republics, Turkey, and then up through Europe. While the trip is reminiscent of Ewan McGregor's Long Way Round, Gray and Climo only became aware of McGregor's odyssey when they began researching their own trip. Initially inspired by a train journey Gray took through Russia, Siberia, and Mongolia on his way home from Denmark, they were even more energized when they came across the film *African Odyssey*, about four Kiwi guys who rode from Cape Town to London. Following a meeting with the *African Odyssey* guys, Climo said they rolled out a world map and pointed at it with sticks. And so began the "51st Traverse".

The "five blokes" will encounter some of the world's biggest deserts, highest mountains, and extremes of heat as they move through the 18 countries on their trip. "We're going from Siberia in spring, which will be freezing, to Mongolia, and it'll be boiling, to freezing in the mountains, to boiling in the Aral Sea, which is dried up, and then a Mediterranean summer," said Gray. "If it sounds uncomfortable, we'll do it," laughed Climo.

When you consider the size of the bikes they're riding (250cc and 650cc Suzukis), the fact none of them speak the language (Gray is attempting to learn Russian), and that until last May not one of the five could actually ride a motorbike, you can't help wondering what is driving this extreme journey.

It's about adventure. "It's going to take everything we have and more, but I've still got this feeling that it's going to give us a lot as well," said Climo. "It's going to give us an experience that can never be taken away." It's also about visiting some of the most extreme

places in the world "where random travellers are not a common occurrence". Said Gray, "We want to see the biggest deserts and the highest mountains in the world, and we want to experience our world."

But more importantly, it's about supporting Living Hope, a charity run by New Zealander Rachel Hughes, who is based in Russia and is putting all her energy and time into creating a safe place for Vladivostok's street children. "As with most charities, they're looking for funds to do their next project, and the project she's working on now is the 24-hour, drop-in centre, to get about 20 children off the street at night and give them somewhere humane and dignified to sleep," said Climo. During his trip through Siberia two years ago, Gray spent some time with a guy who helps out similar street kids. "It's so cold there in winter, like minus 40 degrees, the inside of your nose freezes the instant you step outside, and these kids don't even have proper gear, they sleep in basements and sewers. They're so young, like eight-year-old kids who are sleeping around and addicted to drugs," he said.

They have begun a campaign called "Cash for Ks", through which they're trying to raise \$25,000, which will be enough for Living Hope to build the dormitory for 20 kids to sleep in, said Gray.

They also have two other campaigns running alongside the Cash for Ks. The second is their own food and fuel fund, where people can donate to assist them along their journey.

With the third campaign, they're asking corporate sponsors to help them fill a container. "We've got a 20-foot container going to Vladivostok, and it's only got five motorbikes in it," said Gray. "We want to fill the rest with stuff for Living Hope. Mattresses, pots, pans... And it has to be brand new because of import restrictions." The container will leave in mid to late February, so any corporates wanting to assist should get in touch with either Gray or Climo as soon as possible.

To help the "five blokes" get on their way, or to donate to the Living Hope campaign so that 20 street kids will have a place to sleep at night, visit <http://www.51st.co.nz/home.html>.

From the **Australian Papers**



Rogues' gallery lands artist in court

ARTIST FAY Plamka received a \$A2,000 fine on 17 November 2009, after she admitted to breaching a suppression order. Plamka displayed a sketch identifying a police informer at a recent art exhibition, despite having been warned that the man's identity was suppressed.

The Age, 18 November 2009, p A4

ATO chases Myer millions

IT NOW appears that the freezing of accounts owned by TPG Capital following its float of Myer was triggered by an unexpected strategy of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Rather than trying to collect capital gains tax on the transaction, the ATO has deemed the ownership structure of the department store by the private equity firm an attempt to avoid tax in general. The legal action taken by the agency may be the first step in a wider crackdown on the sector, and on the use of offshore entities by groups like TPG.

The Sydney Morning Herald, 18 November 2009, p 1

Property split crashes marital war

THE FAMILY Court of Australia has made an unusual ruling in a divorce case. The estranged husband and wife can both use different parts of the same large house and included office, with the man able to enter the woman's section for two hours a day at around noon to conduct business. The wife must not interfere with his clients' visits. However, she has also been granted an apprehended violence restraining order against her ex-partner, meaning that if she is present, he cannot enter the designated area without breaking the law.

The Australian, 18 November 2009, p5

Fears copyright trade agreement could criminalise the internet

THERE ARE concerns that Internet users could face criminal penalties if the proposed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement is ratified. The sixth round of negotiations over the agreement were held in South Korea in early November 2009, and talks will resume in Mexico in January 2010. ISPs may also be subject to new regulations designed to deter piracy and the breaching of copyright laws.

The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 November 2009, p 4

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