



## Tenth Meeting

### FreeSchools World Literacy Australia

DATE commencing: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008 TIME: 9 am  
DATE completion: Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2008 TIME: 9 pm

INTERNET VENUE: FreeSchools Literacy Australia email network  
[fswl-australia@googlegroups.com](mailto:fswl-australia@googlegroups.com)

### Minutes of the Meeting

#### 1. Rollcall of members and others present and apologies.

There were 9 participants in attendance  
Robert Coenraads (President)  
Ben Bowler (Vice-President)  
Delphine Swadling (Secretary)  
Merindi Swadling (Treasurer)  
Kathleen Swadling (Committee)  
Yvonne Hirt (Committee)  
Jildou Brouwer  
Chelsea McLean  
Sue Tennant

#### 2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Ninth meeting were sent to each member of the committee and were accepted by the committee  
Moved by Merindi Swadling and Seconded by Ben Bowler

#### 3. Reports from the Committee.

The President's Report was received by the committee

##### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to the 10th meeting of FSWL Australia.  
Another series of amazing emails from Sue's India visit (see discussion below) have made this meeting a pleasure to attend and marvel at God's subtle, but firm, guiding hand in this entire process.

Chelsea has contributed a most valuable business plan for our Australian operations that we should all take the time to study carefully (see **Appendix 1**).

Thanks again to all of you for taking the time to participate, and for your valuable comments.

Kind regards,  
Dr. Robert Coenraads (President)

#### 4. Progress in Thailand.

#### 5. Progress in India

**Sue:** I spent 5 days in Delhi last week over Easter and Holi (the festival of colours). I bought a laptop and printer to take to Bihar, toured two new schools (4 classes) in a very poor area of Uttar Pradesh (an hour from Delhi), had a really great meeting with Rev. Amos and Ella. He shared classified information with me regarding new legislation expected to pass in May that will come down hard on foreign and religious charities doing community service in India. Because FSWL offers secular education, free from religious discrimination and proselytizing, Amos thinks we are in good shape. He wants FreeSchools to be separate from ISPCCK and is talking to his lawyers and accountants about incorporating FreeSchools World Literacy - Asia. Also he has offered any reporting assistance for the FreeSchools in Bihar. He was very impressed with Saskia's new 110-page booklet that describes the work in Bihar. He knows the immense work and skill involved and we are on the same page about the millennium goal of "Education for All". We will meet again this coming Tuesday.

Meanwhile, this is my 6th day at the convent in Bettiah. It would have been much better to have had two weeks here but Sr. Crescence has her retreat next week and she really needs a break. I have recorded a lot of her answers to questions but we still have several more to complete, plus the budget. I've interviewed two young men to be an assistant to Crescence but their English is poor and their writing skills are inadequate. We return to Patna tomorrow and I fly back to Delhi Monday. Until we find the right person, we are getting help from Sr. Elise's team next door which we will pay for.

Working in this environment has been exhausting.. The heat and mosquitoes are simply beyond belief and I've had endless computer problems. Not having Saskia who has worked with computers since they started in the cartoon business has been awful. I keep thinking what a difference it would have made if Keyur, Darryl or Keyur were here this trip to help! But I have managed to set up a FreeSchools office with Internet access through a USB modem and a prepaid SIM card. Anyone who comes here with a laptop will be able to download the software to their own computer and use the Internet stick, which is portable in their own room. Most email needs to be done in the night so this will be convenient for visitors. Of course the problem is always power. This is a 19th century environment, but right next door with Sr. Elise's project it's 21st century. I have gotten some help. But everyone is so busy and we are trying to be independent. Of course many people are ingratiating themselves because they hope they can come on Board as a consultant (that we would pay) with FreeSchools. The financial need here is always so in your face and compelling. There's just no escaping the poverty! It just would be simpler if we had a volunteer from Canada. There has only been power for 1 1/2 hours per day. My small laptop has 4 hours of use on the battery but the FreeSchools laptop has only 2. Every in a while the power comes on for 15 or 20 minutes and I rush to recharge the computers.

We have spent quite a lot of time on the budget - turns out Sr. Crescence has quite a bureaucracy around her - the Indian way. The most successful tool has been my mini recorder. The way Sr. Crescence answers questions is so thoughtful, sincere and even elegant. She is truly one in ten million and I have been fortunate to have had intimate conversations with her. She really is a master teacher and is always teaching everyone - anyone who crosses her path - a boy who mumbles for example. She will lovingly take him aside and exhort him to "Speak up!" and then she'll explain all the benefits to be won by showing courage and confidence. It's such a marvellous demonstration of caring deeply about developing the good things in others. The FreeSchools teachers are inspired and nurtured by her just as lovingly as the novices and sisters in the convent. You will read in the transcripts how she brings the teachers to tears and empowers them to love the children when no one else can, even their parents. This is the spirit in the FreeSchools in Bihar and is why it is so successful. The other place where this same spirit

dominates is in Sondeaw's school near Chaing Mai. It's difficult to express what I sense when I'm with Crescence, but it's something like I'm in the presence of greatness and I may be one of only a few in the West who truly appreciate this. She's not perfect because she's very hard to pin down for even an hour - so many people depend on her -but she is absolutely the most extraordinary person I have met.

And Sr Elise, who is an independent nun I now understand, and runs the social outreach programs with a staff of 350, supported by NGOs is also one in ten million and she is equally inspiring. It's just that she's not directly involved with FreeSchools but her heart is with us and she provides our transportation from Patna and visiting all the schools - which is no small matter.

One last thing, inflation is high in India. Buildings materials such as cement, steel and bricks have doubled in price since last November. It's making life even more difficult for the poor. We are raising teacher and supervisor salaries from 600INR (\$15).month to 700INR just because they cannot survive as before. Our \$15/child is no longer viable. Anyway this will all be reflected in our budget which I hope to complete next week before returning to Canada.

**Sue:** Since you are meeting now I have an update - for our mutual appreciation of how God works. I just got off the phone with Rev. Amos. He is reeling in shock and disbelief from an intense 45 minute meeting with his wife "Anu" this morning.

Let me back up a couple of days. After our very positive meeting together talking about incorporating FSWL in India (we need separate secular Indian society status because of new legislation expected to come down hard on foreign charities and religious charities), Amos shared for the first time a bit about FreeSchools that evening with his wife. To his surprise she was very enthusiastic and ask him to get me on the phone to set up a meeting the next day at her school. She is principal of one of the 5 most progressive schools in India (3000+) girls. She has never been involved in his FreeSchools except to contribute to the family tithing. She has never even seen them.

So we met yesterday and it was clear to me that she is a very capable woman indeed. She is very tall and dignified and looks like she should be the President of India. I shared the FreeSchools story emphasizing that we have an ambitious goal, that it is difficult, but that both the goal and the mission are Divine. She is a spirit-led person and from then on we talked the same language. Amos had told me that she is very connected to education and government officials all over India and that she has always preferred working with Catholics - worked with the Jesuits for 14 years. She has even worked in Bettiah with all kinds of contacts there and throughout Bihar. Her list of achievements goes on and on.

After two hours, she asked what I would want from her and I was bold to say, that because of her credibility as an administrator across cultural and religious differences, broad experience as a teacher, high profile, her contacts, her relationships with parents of the rich and powerful, her knowledge of Bihar and particularly Bettiah, the way her 350 teaching staff love her fairness and gentleness ( I read card on her desk), that we would appreciate her considering becoming the future Coordinator of the Free Schools in Asia. I reminded her that we could not pay her anything like what she is used to. Can you imagine how preposterous I must have sounded? Well, she said yes. She said the money is not why she would do it. I wasn't sure how anyone could make such a decision so quickly.

Last night, Ashish did not broach the subject of our meeting. But I had told her that I would be calling him at 11 a.m. today to get his version of her feedback. This morning she gave notice to Ashish that a year from now she will give up her job (which is considered much more than a plum!!) and work full-time for FreeSchools - that she has worked 21 years for the rich and now she wants to give the next 17 years of her to the poor. She has prayed about it and has come to this decision. She feels called by God to do this and wants the challenge. Ashish says once she makes up her mind, that's it.

Ashish and I debriefed this morning and he says he can hardly believe what's happened - he's feeling just a little insecure about the idea of the loss of a substantial second income with a daughter studying law at an expensive university, his son in a good private school. He says his wife brings the status and contacts to the family not him - all those kind of human anxieties he fully shared. Bless him. I know only too well the tests of wholeheartedness. It does have its risks. But Anu has already set up a meeting tonight regarding incorporation and establishment of a foreign account (very very difficult without a bribe) with the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Can you imagine that he is her friend? And since she's done him lots of favours she says it's time for him to do her one. So she's already starting.

The next step is for the two of us to visit Sr. Crescence and the FreeSchools in Bihar - probably October 2-6. I told her the convent is very poor and she said not to worry, she knows all about roughing it. So that's the latest development in the ongoing FreeSchools saga. It's amazing to be part of this incredible journey towards world literacy - to participate with God righting one of the most important underlying injustices in the world. Divine work. That's for sure. Thank you everyone for your interest, prayers and support!

**Jildou:** Dear Sue, What an amazing few weeks you have had and now this amazing news... I'm very, very happy to hear that such a great woman will be the Free Schools coordinator of India. How brave...

Thanks for sharing your mission and adventures.

**Yvonne:** Hi Sue, what can I say to your update but WOW!  
Thank you Sue..

**Robert:** Dear Sue, I can't Believe it! That is an absolutely incredible chain of events. I have read your email to my family and it is definitely more than coincidence that two God-indwelt individuals have been brought together to further such an important cause..

**Kathleen:** Wow.....! Breathtaking stuff..... Amazing....

**Yvonne:** Dear Sue, Consider it done in earnest by prayer and meditation and among my special meditation prayer group each Saturday.

**Sue:** Hello dear Robert, Yes, it may be that God had all this planned from the beginning. Maybe you could look at this "chain of events" and fill in any important pieces I might have missed.

1. 1997, Mark visits Sr. Crescence in Bihar and supports her idea of a free evening school. Mark's family helps out financially for 3 years (??).

2. February, 2000, Mark, Kathleen and Robert work the Urantia Booth at the Delhi Book Fair and meet Rev. Amos, Secretary General, ISPCCK, who eventually publishes The Urantia Book in India. After the Book Fair, Mark and Robert visit Sr. Crescence in Bihar. Robert organizes future funding and pen pal relationships from Australia.

4. February 2004, Kathleen and Richard Keeler ask for financial support for book-seeding efforts in Latin America. Sue gets pledges of support from Ontario readers and eventually establishes email contact with Mark who shares a desire to expand Crescence's free evening school model in Thailand and throughout Asia.

5. February 2005, Mark visits Silver Springs to partner with Sue to expand the model in both India and Thailand. Mark begins opening FreeSchools in Thailand. In May, Sue incorporates FreeSchools World Literacy. In July, Sue presents FreeSchools at IC'05 (near Philadelphia). Raises \$6,500 US in support from UB readers. In August, Sue meets Merindi at Silver Springs.

6. January 2006, Sue joins Urantia Foundation as an Associate Trustee. In May, FSWL is registered as a Canadian charity.

7. July 2006 at the International Urantia conference in Sydney, Merindi unexpectedly gives FreeSchools plenary time. Ben Bowler and Jildou Brouwer volunteer to free up Mark.

8. September 2006, Merindi comes to Canada for a year to manage Silver Springs and help FreeSchools. In October, Sue, Saskia and Mark visit the FreeSchools in Thailand and Bihar. Sue visits Rev. Amos in Delhi on Urantia Foundation business. They share a mutual interest in educating the poor. Saskia and Sue tour Amos' schools and women's empowerment centres and Sue suggests they consider teaming up.

9. March 2007, Ben and Jildou take over management of the Thai project from Mark.

10. FSWL-Australia incorporates. In June, Sue visits Ben and Jildou and the Thai schools. In August, the Mirror Foundation agrees to manage the schools for long-term sustainability, taking over from Ben and Jildou in December.

11. October-November 2007, Sue, Saskia and Dr. John Lange visit FreeSchools in Bihar. In Delhi, Sue and Rev. Amos join forces and the ISPCK schools become ISPCK FreeSchools.

14. In Delhi March 2008, Rev. Amos updates Sue on legislative changes expected to come down hard on foreign charities and religious organizations. Says we need to incorporate FSWL in India but very difficult to get a foreign bank account Sue has focused meetings with Sr. Crescence in Bihar over 7 days to answer questions and discuss 3-year vision and strategic plan for the Bihar schools. Sets up laptop/printer and Internet for FreeSchools office at the SSH Banuchapar convent.

15. Sr. Crescence and Rev. Amos individually share with Sue their realization that the goal/mission of FreeSchools World Literacy is Divine.

16. Anu Amos announces her willingness to help incorporate FSWL- Asia. Starting in March of 2009 she has agreed to leave her job as principal of St. Thomas School and become full-time Co-ordinator of FSWL-Asia. Sue and Anu to visit Sr. Crescence and FreeSchools in Bihar October 2-6.

17. In April, FSWL supports 80 teachers and supervisors in 51 FreeSchools. These numbers are expected to rise slightly in 2008.

All the people, all the threads of connection, all the teamwork, in such a short period of time, are quite extraordinary. As they say in India, "Isn't it?"

**Ben:** That is Awesome Sue. What a tapestry and how fortunate we all are who have been touched by this chain of events.

**Robert:** It is wonderful to see all of the events listed out like that, and it does make you realize just how quickly things have come along - undoubtedly under God's subtle guiding hand. Just to help on a few of those points.

1. Yes, Mark was bringing a donation from his family as part of the funds he was carrying for hand delivery to Sister Crescence in Feb 2000 (the only way it could be done back then) so therefore his family had been helping for 3 years. I don't know if they are still involved, though.

2. Rev Amos' printing quote that he gave us in Feb 2000 was "materials cost only" and therefore the future printing was the lowest production cost of a Urantia Book print run ever. It

was an act of great benevolence by Rev Amos following after our first meeting of just a few hours. The book seemed to have spoken to him. We were so concerned, however, at the time of his "rash decision" that we told him we would allow him to think about it overnight and meet again the next day to confirm his decision. So, we could insert the words "at cost" at the end of the first sentence.

7. Insert after the first sentence - A group of readers at the Australian conference volunteer to form a steering committee to prepare for the official formation of FSWL in Australia

10. FSWL incorporated in Australia on 16th July 2007, so start point 10 with "July 2007 FSWL\_ Australia ..."

**Sue:** Thanks for those additional facts. I didn't realize that Rev, Amos published The Urantia Book at cost. Amazing.

**Kathleen:** Hi Sue, that's quite amazing when you put it all together like that. When we just get on with "living loyally each moment..." we don't really think too much about the chains of events, but when you look back on it like this it's really quite astounding. Just goes to show how the "act is ours, the consequences God's".

The one thing that really jumps out here is the interlocking between significant Urantia Book related events (and the consequent involvement of UB readers) and the evolution of FSWL. Each Urantia story – like the book fairs in New Delhi, the links with ISPCK, the printing of the book in India, the Latin American seeding program – are all fascinating stories in their own right too, and were happening in parallel to the development of FSWL. Like different branches growing from the same tree. Such a wonderful pattern... truly amazing. Thanks for putting it together like this.

## 6. General Business.

The following discussion took place during the meeting and is recorded here under the following headings:

### 1. Media and Publicity Strategy Document:

**Chelsea:** Warm greetings to you... I hope all has been well and have been keeping up to-date by reading your group emails. Getting used to working as well as motherhood has provided some distractions for me! However I have been preparing the attached publicity strategy document as a basis for working together to raise the profile of FSWL Australia.

Whenever you have a chance, feel free to comment and add to this working document. This week I also mailed you a book about how non-profit organisations can generate free media publicity. It may explain how publicity works and reveal a bit more about the strategies in this document.

Next week I am travelling to the USA for a few weeks and will return in early May. I hope we can talk more then.

**Robert:** Thank you for your letter and I wish you much joy in all of the distractions of motherhood, and all the best for your coming overseas trip. The Media Publicity Book that you sent me has arrived and I will now read it thoroughly - and I am sure that it will help greatly as I know very little about that game. I am looking forward also to studying and acting on your Media Strategy Plan.

**Robert:** Dear Committee, From this month's meeting I would like you all to take away the attached (see **Appendix 1**) Media Publicity Strategy document researched and prepared by Chelsea (in between her duties of motherhood) and study it to see how such a structure might be implemented and think about what role you could play in this as we move forward. All of us in the committee are likely to have an ambassadorial role in FreeSchools, so I would like us all to prepare a short punchy curriculum vitae for inclusion in various publicity documents.

Here is one for me of about 100 words that I am working on, as an example:

*Dr. Robert Coenraads established an Australian support network for the first free school for underprivileged children at Motihari in Bihar State, India, and is currently President of FreeSchools World Literacy - Australia. Robert is a professional geoscientist, and author of four internationally published books and over 30 scientific publications. During his 30-year exploration career, travel to numerous remote and poor regions of the globe have sparked a strong humanitarian interest. It is his firm belief that education for all children, not just a privileged few, is the key to solving all other problems such as overpopulation, hunger and poverty.*

These CVs could also be tailored for a secular or religious audience, with the above one being more secular in nature.

Also if you could organize a photograph (perhaps ahead and shoulders passport plus any others that you feel would be useful – (eg the one of Ben and Jildou with some of the Thai students), which could be, used along with the CV that would be great. We could keep a collection of photos of each individual in a portfolio for use as necessary.

## 2. Transfer of Donna's Funds to Canada

**Merindi:** I've just sent you and Sharon a separate email ... these funds are for Thailand, Donna is sponsoring Darika and Channon. The CAD amount was slightly less than AUD (\$233).

**Robert:** Thanks for taking care of that transfer, Merindi. Thank you everyone for your participation in the 10th meeting.

## 7. Set date and time for COM meeting. Close meeting

Meetings of the Committee of FSWL Australia will be held on the first Friday of each month. The next official meeting will be from Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2008.

The Committee is thanked for its involvement

END OF MINUTES

## Appendix 1

### Free Schools World Literacy – Media Publicity Strategy

Prepared by Chelsea McLean

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This document gives an overview of the suggested strategy and ideas we could use to generate promotional media publicity for Free Schools World Literacy Australia. It covers:

1. Target audience
2. Target media
3. Key messages
4. Media tools
5. Story ideas
6. Partners / celebrities

*This is a working document and we welcome all input, especially on the areas in blue.*

## 1. Target audience

- What kind of Australian is most likely to sponsor a Free Schools student?
- What age and type of person? What is their demographic profile?

Findings from recent QUT research shows:

- People on average incomes give more to charitable causes than wealthy Australians.
- Charities need to become more sophisticated in encouraging the rich to give more, by establishing the impact they have so they can demonstrate clearly what the investor will get in return by making an investment in them. The non-profit sector needs to engage the wealthy more by spending time building relationships, trust and integrity.

## 2. Target media

The goal is to reach our target audience using repetition of our key messages. First, we need to establish: best timing, available time of spokesperson, need for media training, and development of media tools including and up-to-date media kit, DVD, images.

We can offer exclusive stories to key target media when possible, depending on the story. We can also target media stories on Sundays and public holidays... These are quiet news days when there is less competition for editorial space the next day.

Our target media could include:

**Parents:** parenting magazines, parenting websites, local newspapers, radio stations, metro newspaper magazines, women's magazines, morning TV talk shows, evening TV current affairs programs, etc.

**Grandparents:** Rotarian Life, global issues magazines including Time, The Bulletin & Living Now, motoring association magazines, travel magazines, etc.

**Children:** Channel Ten's TTN T program, afternoon and weekend morning TV programs, etc.

**Ethnic:** Especially Indian and Thai media outlets in Australia. About 3 million Australians speak languages other than English and there are around 200 ethnic newspapers and 98 radio stations in Australia.



**Mass media:** Current affairs programs, the news media, feature-style sections, and AAP news-wire. Letters to editors of about 150 to 200 words in length in response to relevant articles and events.

**Online blogs:** Relevant websites can help create a buzz among our target audience. Our volunteers and committee members can help us blog to post stories with links to the FSWLA website.

### 3. Key messages

We need to decide on what our main message is and frame it for our audience, then use repetition to get it across. *When we are tired of saying it, people will just be hearing it for the first time!*

*Sample message – for all potential sponsors:*

Sponsoring a student so they can go to school in India or Thailand can make a huge difference to their future and help to solve larger issues like poverty, illness and violence.

*Sample message – for parents:*

By sponsoring a student, your child can help to improve world literacy and gain a broader understanding of how children live in countries less fortunate than Australia.

- In our communications, we can provide statistics on relevant numbers, e.g. world illiteracy rates, and update these regularly to show progress or stagnation. We can compare global literacy rates with Australian literacy rates.
- We can offer solution to problems like poverty, illness and violence.
- Our headlines can link to money, health and controversy to interest our audience.

### 4. Media Tools

Our media kit already includes a media release with a newsworthy angle, a backgrounder on the organisation, a case study of a current student, images of the schools, and the CD about FSWL. *Filmed footage on DVD would also be beneficial for TV coverage if there is any way we can arrange this.*

We also need to include a biography of our Australian spokesperson and their photograph.

We could put the media kit onto the FSWLA website, along with the mobile number of the spokesperson so it can be easily found by media visiting the website.

### 5. Story ideas

- Profile the students who need sponsors and tell their stories e.g. Darrin from Thailand

- Link to bigger issues like politics and culture to tell the Free Schools story and raise awareness about education in India and Thailand.
- Tell how investing in education builds higher levels of civic engagement, lower levels of crime and less social disadvantage.
- Link to illiteracy issue as the root of other issues like poverty, violence and illness.
- Piggyback on issues making news that can be related to the world literacy cause.
- Localise stories e.g. committee members' local media profiling their involvement in FSWL, e.g. how Robert's daughters are sponsoring students.

## **6. Partners / celebrities**

### **1. Possible endorsements from Australian celebrities**

FSWL Australia could enlist the support of a relevant Australian celebrity to raise the profile of the organisation and help spread our key messages. We could invite the celebrity on a tour of the schools in India/Thailand so they can experience first-hand the positive impact of sponsoring a student.

Finding a celebrity would mean first working out who will appeal to our audience and who shares sympathy for world literacy through their passion and experience. It also means choosing someone who is not already overexposed in the media and who can deliver something unique for the media. Some initial ideas could include:

- Sarah MacDonald – has worked for ABC in Australia and in India and written a book based on her time living in India
- Jonathan Harley – married to Sarah MacDonald, former ABC correspondent based in India, now reporting for 60 minutes
- Young Australian of the Year 2008 – Dan Adams – helping developing nations eradicate poverty with Oaktree Foundation 'Schools 4 Schools' project
- Mary Kostakidis – from SBS and public speaker – interested in women, education and international issues and is on various committees
- Shivani Gupta – migrated from India to South Australia aged 11, winner of many Australian business awards and helps women find their passion in business

### **2. Possible links with other organisations**

Partnering with another organisation in line with FSWL values could widen access to our audience. Here are some initial ideas on those we could enlist support from or work with:

- Local, state or federal government representatives who are willing to endorse FSWLA or do something to help raise awareness through the media or an event.

- Any organisations promoting literacy through the arts.
- The United Nations for our work helping to raise awareness for the current 'Decade of Literacy'.
- Organisations supporting charitable work that brings about sustainable positive change like:
  - Changemakers Australia - <http://www.changemakers.org.au/>
  - Social Benches Australia – bring philanthropists together with charitable causes
  - Pro Bono Australia <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/> - make use of free News Service and [www.volunteermatch.com.au](http://www.volunteermatch.com.au) and annual directory listing
  - Philanthropy Australia <http://www.philanthropy.org.au/>
  - Oxfam Australia – link to support for women and marginalised groups
  - Not For Profit Network - <http://www.nfpn.com.au>

#### Bibliography

O'Rourke Annie (2007). Media on a shoestring. Media tactics for community organisations. Media Team Australia. Suite 2, 16 Bouganville St, Manuka St, ACT 2603. Ph (02)6295 8300

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