



## Seventeenth Meeting

### FreeSchools World Literacy Australia

DATE commencing: Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009 TIME: 9 am  
DATE completion: Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2009 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)  
Merindi Belarski (Treasurer)  
Ian Esmore (Public Officer)  
Kathleen Swadling (Committee Member)  
Delphine Swadling (Committee Member)  
Betty Lyon (Committee Member)  
Judy Townsend  
Sue Tennant

2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Sixteenth meeting were sent to each member of the committee and were accepted by the committee  
Moved by Merindi Belarski and Seconded by Ian Esmore

3. Reports from the Committee.

The Committee received the President's Report

#### PRESIDENTS REPORT

I welcome you all to our 17th meeting of FSWL Australia. Although 2009 began as a bright, shiny, new year - full of hope, it has also been one unfortunately blackened and tarnished by the recent Victorian Bushfire Tragedy in which many good lives have been needlessly lost.

Although death may strike any of us at any moment, perhaps our hopes and dreams may live on – and this was clearly the case with the recent passing of one of our long-standing FreeSchools supporters, Gerhard Neuwiller. For several years now Gerhard has been providing a FreeSchools scholarship to support the Indian student, Ashish Kumar Majhi, in his high school studies. Ashish has four sisters and one brother. His own parents have been unable to help him with their family income of only Rs. 1800 (A\$55) per month, and so Gerhard generously undertook this responsibility. .

Thanks to Gerhard this dream has become a reality for this young man. Ashish is now 19 years old and at his recent graduation gave the following speech:

*"I am Ashish Kumar and a scholarship student. First of all I give thanks to all the members of the Board of the Free Evening School. I am very lucky because I've got a golden chance to tell how the Board has played an important role in my life. Today I stand here only by the grace of the Evening School. This school gave me different kinds of opportunities in my life. Dear friends, I was born in a very poor family. In my family we are 8 members. I have 4 sisters and 2 brothers. When I was born only my father worked hard to feed my family. He had no other economic support. He worked at Sacred Heart Convent in Patna as a gardener and had a dream that every child would get an education. At this time Sr. Crescence was Superior General of SSH. My father told her about my family and his economic problems. At this time Sr. Crescence came into my family like an Angel sent by God. She is really a Goddess for my family and me. She felt my family's problems and decided to help. She brought me from Patna to Motihari in March 1988 and I was admitted to the Evening School. I didn't know the alphabet ABC but eventually completed my primary education in the Evening School. Sr. Crescence came every day and sat with me teaching me to read and write. After 2 years I was admitted to St. Mary's Catholic High School in Motihari but continued every day with the Evening School. After some years I wrote the Matriculation Examination and passed with Second division. I had a dream to become a Lab Technician. I returned to Patna for further studies in December 2005 and completed I.Sc. with Second division. Now I am doing a B.A. and am working as a teacher in Naya Gaon Chapra. I am very grateful to you Ma'am. Your grace changed my life. It fulfilled my dream. I was nothing, but this Free Evening School made me something. I am grateful to all the Board members of the Free Evening School and I pray that God may give you all grace and strength to continue your good works. Thank you."*

Hopes are also high for FreeSchools World Literacy in Australia this year with snowballing support from Australian volunteers and donors, exciting reports from the January Indian and Thai FreeSchools visits, and with a Charity Luncheon to raise funds for the Thai FreeSchools.

Thank you to the new Committee of Management for your continued support and hard work in raising FreeSchools World Literacy - Australia to a professional level.

Dr. Robert Coenraads  
President,  
FreeSchools World Literacy – Australia

#### 4. Progress in Thailand.

**Judy and Jo:** The first story about the amazing Hill Tribe kids at FreeSchools in northern Thailand is on the Ch9, 8 -8.30 morning news tomorrow (Sunday). It is a feature so it will probably be on later in the bulletin. Of course if WW3 breaks out it will be bumped to next weekend but here's hoping the kids get a bit of publicity. Our first afternoon tea/fun afternoon to fund a village teacher will be on 22nd Feb and Acer Arena has given us Box Seats to any show in 2009 to start the fun. You can choose what to see. If Murray wins them he wants to go to Top Gear! Can't believe we can fund a teacher for a whole year for just \$3000. Hope you can see it - it will go onto 9MSN afterwards if you miss it.

**Robert:** Dear FSWL Committee and Friends,

Please note that there is going to be a newscast tomorrow (Sunday) morning about the FreeSchools in northern Thailand. It is on at 8 am Sunday on Channel 9 and is a direct outcome of Jo and Judy Townsend's recent visit to the Thai FreeSchools. It is excellent publicity for the vital educational work being carried out by our fledgling organization.

**Robert:** The report on the FreeSchools of northern Thailand was terrific. With excellent footage and clear, to-the-point reportage by Joanna Townsend, the news segment clearly emphasized the ridiculously low cost of educating poor children. Short appearances by Sue as the President of FSWL together with the clearly displayed address to the FreeSchools Website was brilliant. It wasn't the usual request for donations but effectively alerted those out there who care about the well being and education of children, that there is an extremely cost effective way to help. Congratulations Jo, Judy and Sue

**Judy and Jo:** Thanks for your comments. Your help in getting us over there was fantastic as well. Most of our boxes were opened by "officials" of some sort but everything arrived safe and sound and was distributed. We had a copy of your letter in every box, plus pictures of the kids and a sign in Thai and English that said "DONATED GOODS NOT FOR SALE".

The 22nd is not confirmed as a date yet (waiting for an amazing fundraiser to come home from Thailand tomorrow to confirm). As soon as we are sure we will be issuing invitations to as many people as we can think of. It will be from 2 - 5pm on a Sunday afternoon. Admission is free and there will be 3 coffee machines to make coffee and yummy food cooked by my friends. I am organising an artist to make a huge elephant and we will be playing "pin the tail on the elephant" for an amazing prize (that Ch9 is donating - haven't asked them yet!) My friends are making cakes and they will have the recipe next to them. You will be asked to guess the weight of the cake and the closest wins the cake. We hope to have approx 100 prizes all ready and to get one you buy a beautiful photograph of one of the Hill Tribe kids. On the back will be FreeSchools World Literacy web address and also a number that corresponds to your prize - which will be worth double what you pay. eg we hope to have movie tickets donated and they are worth about \$10 so they will be from a \$5 photo. We have some box seats to any show this year at the Syd Ent centre. I have a beautiful knitted blanket for a lucky door prize. Another friend (an amazing volunteer) will bring a palm reader for a bit of fun. Some people will stay for coffee and cake (donation tin) and some will buy a photo, some will have a guess at the competitions and some people will just come to have a sticky beak - all will be welcome. Some will stay for half an hour, and some will stay on - doesn't matter. I have 2 big decks and plenty of space for a big crowd. We are going to have a big jar of M&Ms (hopefully donated) - with the usual guess the number and win the whole jar. Obviously there will be a big photo display and lots of footage of the freeSchools kids. They are so gorgeous that it will be enough just to have them on show. I have 2 TVs - just old ones near the decks so they can show continuously.

Basically an afternoon of fun - hopefully with the result of funding some of the salary for the new village teacher. Can you make it? We can finally meet. Feel as though I know you already but it would be lovely. I have never raised any money in my life - but I am great at getting "stuff". Hopefully this will transform into some money for the teacher. Getting people to come is the hard part. I don't have hundreds of friends just sitting around with nothing better to do on a

Sunday afternoon than go to a FreeSchools afternoon tea! Getting it into the paper will be a big thing - haven't even thought about that as yet. Everyone that I have spoken to has been very positive so here's hoping it will be well supported.

**Maureen:** Found this while googling about you guys and Thailand. It's the interview on 2GB. Hope it works. Jo speaks so well during the interview.

<http://podcasts.2gb.com/2gb.xml>

**Judy:** Sue, I emailed the photos into the paper today and they are hoping to run the story this week. I asked for donations for our afternoon tea as well. Had my neighbour over today and she offered to make the first cake - (that we will guess the weight) - a boiled fruit cake that has mango in it. Wonderful evidently. Hope you are almost ready to go home to your lovely man. Next time you will have to get a flexible fare. Merindi emailed as well so word is spreading that the TV has picked up FreeSchools as a story. So wonderful. It was great - especially as Jo was worried because the footage wasn't filmed with a professional cameraman, lighting guy and sound. You and Paul were great.

**Ben:** It's a great report, here's the link:

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/video.aspx?videoid=2346c93a-d59b-40af-a220-363c86067563>

**Ian:** I followed the link and viewed the report. There was no way I could download the file. Is someone able to followup contact to get a copy on CD?

**Judy:** I am hoping that the newspaper article will help next week as well. So many people have heard the word FreeSchools now. Jo and I have put the link onto our Facebook page so now hopefully all of our friends will watch the video. it was quite long for a news report - they are usually much shorter than that. Now it has to transfer into funds for the new village school. Maybe a millionaire will watch it and decide to help fund a school for these wonderful kids! It is certainly not a lot of money and we are sure we can do it. I am running a slice drive at school as well - doesn't make a lot of money but it means that i can talk about what the money is for - FreeSchools Worls Literacy. I am guest speaker at our library association on Monday week and I am sure there will be people there who will want to get involved.

Warm regards - if you lose the link again go to ninemsn, then news, then video, then type in One Village at a Time in the search box and there it will be (after the ad of course. Hope it gets lots and lots of hits. Judy

**Betty:** Robert, I just watched the channel 9 video and thought it be excellent. If we can get a copy of this in DVD it would be great to show at the fundraisers I am planning. Can you tell me if there is somebody arranging to have it copied?

Jo has asked people to send an email if they are doing any fundraising in Feb/Mar. Do you want me to let her know direct about my plans here in Franklin. I am planning to hold my first activity the 3rd week in Feb.

**Rita:** Vern has made a PDF of Geri's reports - much easier to circulate by e-mail. I thought you might want to distribute or file it yourself. Cheers/

**Robert:** Dear Committee, Please find attached Geri's diary of her visit to the Indian FreeSchools, These reports serve to give a very intimate impression of life in India and within our FreeSchools. In this form they can be readily printed out for publicity. Thank you Rita and Vern for getting the reports into this usable form.

**Robert:** Dear Committee, Here is our big opportunity to assist Joanna and Judy Townsend with the inaugural FSWL fund raiser event. To get the ball rolling, please read on..... Thanks,

*"Hi all at FSWL-Australia ...*

*Please empty out your contacts books, and help us by forwarding around the below email to people you know who own businesses or work in PR, or feel free to approach the manager of your local chain stores for prizes.*

*I've had a great response so far, but I'm still after things such as discount vouchers, store vouchers for stores with more than one outlet, good minor prizes for raffles (like a good runner up prize, value about \$100- \$200) and other small prizes.*

*All the best - Jo. (W) 02 9965 2410"*

## 5. Progress in India

**Sue:** Let I'm writing from an Internet cafe in Chiang Rai and will include the texts of three speeches given by scholars at the Sunday program in Sacred Heart School, Banachupar. I have made only a few small edits. As I mentioned before it is compulsory for scholars to give a short speech with their parents present. Sr. C told them to say what they wanted.

Ashish Kumar (see speech above in President's Report).

Sonal Vincent

*"My name is Sonal Racheal Vincent. I am a student of +2. I passed matriculation from St. Teresa's Girls High School, Bettiah in March 2008 and have joined +2 at St Teresa's itself. Now when I stand here before you, I want to express my sincere thanks to you. I'd like to tell you also how the scholarship from the World Literacy program has changed my life. I come from a very small and simple family. My father and mother are very pious and loving, but we are poor. In June 2006, Sr. Crescence assured us of my class fees. What a help this was for us. This help changed me and my thinking. First I was thinking that I cannot become my thing in life because we are poor. Now with a scholarship I feel I can do much. I will study hard and bring good marks and surely I will be a great person in life. One more thing, I felt small because no one knew us. Now when I think that someone in Canada and someone in Australia knows me and loves me, I feel so proud and great. I thank the Lord, our Heavenly Father, who has given us such grace. I cannot tell you how happy I feel and how grateful I am to you Mam. I am still small and have few words but I have a heart full of thanks. I want to say that I am very thankful to the Word Literacy program which changed me. It also gave joy to my father. I pray for you that God our Father bless you, your dear ones and your works. I also pray that He will bless you to help many other children like me. May He always protect you. Amen."*

Deepshika

*I am Deepshika, B.Sc 3rd year, Zoology. I am an Honours Student at Patna Women's College and I joined the Scholarship Group in 2008. I stand here on behalf of the Scholarship Group and all the children of the World Literacy program to welcome you and thank the Board of FreeSchools World Literacy. We are indeed grateful to you Sue Mam, Jeri Mam, Sr. Crescence and to all the others who help us financially to support our education. You and the entire Board are in our lives like a light in the darkness, like a bridge mounting the challenge of our lives while helping us with our education. You make us strong to stand on our own feet and to work for a better career. It is by your very example, that is by your commitment to the poor and needy, that we can ultimately become someone who can think of helping others in society. You have set a very valuable example for us. You are an inspiration to lend a helping hand to people and persons in need. You teach us to help others in their need and command our unselfishness. We do admire you and every effort of yours for spreading the light of education. If you would not have been in our lives most probably, like thousands of selfish people, we would also have been confined by all our needs. What can we return to you for all the valuable help you have provided us? We assure you that we study well. We pray that God will protect you, guide you, inspire you and bring your dream of world literacy to realisation."*

**Robert:** What a wonderful thing it is to hear first hand from the students themselves about how FreeSchools has changed their lives positively for the better - and having experienced the very depths of utter poverty, they are indeed very appreciative at this chance for a much brighter future. It is clear to me that each student's gratitude, their attitude to charity, and the importance of helping others is going to continue cycling through them in their lives, and then the lives of others that they may, one day, in turn, be able to help.

It is great to see Ashish Kumar as, perhaps, our first shining example of a FSWL scholarship student who has gone completely through the system and is now standing firmly and independently upon his own two feet, full of love and thanks - and, as a teacher at Naya Gaon Chapra, Ashish is now in a position to share his story of positive hope with many others. It is a pity that Gerhard did not have the opportunity to read Ashish's speech before he passed away, nevertheless, I am sure that he is seeing the much bigger picture from where he is now.

It was nice also to read about Sonal Vincent, as she and her sister, Samridhi, are the ones that my family are sponsoring and who are both penpals with my daughters, Francheska and Leonora.

Thank you for transcribing those speeches for all of us on the Australian Committee to read. It would have been such an incredibly uplifting experience for you, having been present at the scholarship student's speech giving. I look forward to the opportunity to meet them all personally one day.

With loving thanks and best wishes for your work in Thailand.

**Sue:** Chaing Rai, Thailand

Dear friends and supporters of FreeSchools,

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your past and ongoing interest in and support of FreeSchools. You cannot imagine the good that your thoughts and donations have generated. Please look for more details, updated design and content on our website [www.freeschools.org](http://www.freeschools.org) at the end of February. The following is a brief summary of our recent visits to the FreeSchools in Bihar, India and Thailand this month. I'm returning to India in a few days to visit the remaining schools in Delhi and U.P. We are now supporting 74 FreeSchools and over 90 teachers and supervisors.

On December 31, Geri Johnson (Singapore American School) joined me in Delhi to tour the Bihar FreeSchools. Record cold and fog plagued our flights and transit from Delhi to Patna and Patna to Bettiah making us miss the Health Camp for 350 students in Muzzafarpur. In a harrowing and dangerous drive, with zero visibility at times, we arrived to a freezing cold convent in Bettiah just shy of midnight January 3. The cold was crippling for the sisters and the children, not to mention Geri who has always lived in a warm climate. Despite the bitter cold, the novices and scholars put on an inspiring Sunday welcome program that launched our tightly scheduled week. Nothing held us back from visiting 31 (of 43) schools, but often the children had been waiting a few hours, some barefoot, most were inadequately dressed, a few hundred had walked from their villages (even four-year olds) and many had colds. While they reduced me to tears, nothing seem to dampen their love of learning and enthusiasm for our visit. The first question was always, "When are you coming back?" If you ever don't feel loved or appreciated come with me to visit the FreeSchools in Bihar!

Being an experienced primary school teacher, Geri proved to be an excellent partner with keen observation and many good suggestions. She quickly warmed to the children and always gave a short but stirring speech upon leaving (translated by Sr. Crescence). We now wish she had not waited so late to teach the children "Head and shoulders knees and toes.." as that was a stellar success. The expressions of gratitude by some of the older children, particularly the girls in tailoring classes, was emotional for us both. At the end of the second day Geri told the girls, "This has changed my life."

Just when we thought we were finally done for the day, Sr.Crescence had a surprise public relations task planned for our evenings. We visited the District Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police and the Bishop of Bettiah (a diocese of 18 million). We drank endless

tea and ate sweets so as not to offend and got first-hand an accurate picture of the progress that has been made in the last 3 years and the daunting challenges that still face Bihar. Kidnapping is the biggest crime, the caste system and corruption are still deeply entrenched and government funding for education looks good on paper but does not even begin to reach those millions who need it. Our classes were sometimes swollen to over 100 children and we will have to find and train more teachers. FreeSchools is very successful and after a couple of years we are getting parents to send their children to the government schools but the population of young children waiting for their turn is staggering. We currently have 43 schools in Bihar and there is a potential to double that number within a year or two. We have an immediate need of a vehicle for FreeSchools to properly supervise the schools. The distances are now too great for a bicycle or scooter. We were advised by several experienced people to buy it new. It's just too risky to buy something used. The cost of a bare bones Mahindra is approximately \$30,000 and this is an urgent need.

Saskia Raevouri's dormitory project is well planned by Sr. Crescence who has designed it to maximize light and ventilation. It is going to be a wonderful facility for the "Bridge Course" (as it's called in India), housing and educating up to 30 girls of promise from the villages and giving them more advanced domestic training as well as English, computer and communications skills etc. to qualify them for higher paying jobs. Because building costs basically doubled last year, only the outer brick structure has been completed and about \$25,000 more is needed to finish the interior adequately. I agreed to let Sr. Crescence borrow against the FreeSchools funds to complete as much as she can but we have to aggressively fundraise to make up these funds and complete this project. This is an opportunity for someone with a large sum of money to make an ongoing investment in gifted girls and leave a tangible legacy for world literacy. There will be a great deal of painting to do and we're going to open this opportunity up to volunteers - young and old.

The Thai FreeSchools and our partnership with the Mirror Foundation ([www.mirrorartgroup.org](http://www.mirrorartgroup.org)) are a resounding success and in the coming school year (May), at least 5 schools are ready to be turned over to the government to fund. All the schools have visibly prospered. Up to 5 more will be opened this year in really impoverished villages where there is no access to education. We will provide the teacher and Mirror will get materials donated and if possible the volunteers to build a school. With the FreeSchools commitment to fund the teacher, Mirror has the leverage to get volunteers and donations. The goal is to have the school up and running, after which Mirror can persuade the government to take it over.

The Mirror Foundation is the second largest charity in Thailand and has a remarkable volunteer program attracting thousands of students and adults from all over the world. My Australian friends Judy and Jo Townsend volunteered for a week at Mirror, waiting for me to arrive from India, and they had the experience of a lifetime. Jo had television equipment and got footage of all the FreeSchools plus interviews. When it airs, the Channel 9 news coverage in Sydney may only be a few minutes but she has the raw footage to put together an Australian DVD for fundraising. They also have magazine and local newspapers waiting for their story. Judy and Jo connected with at least a dozen teachers on winter break from Australia, many of whom seem interested in championing the Thai FreeSchools in different parts of Australia. They also met Americans and Canadians as Mirror is such an international hub for people who want to volunteer. It costs \$3000 Cnd. to open and fund a new FreeSchool in Thailand. If someone chooses to adopt this school it is named after that person or group - a great family project. Please help us find sponsors or host a little fundraiser yourself! Look for our new web page on successful fundraising ideas when we go live the end of February.

There are not words to describe what a difference you are helping to make and your past support has helped us get to where we are today. Thank you again for all that you have given to promote awareness and funding for this important work. Let our hearts be joyful and exceedingly glad that we are helping to change the lives of children, their communities and our world. These words belong to you:

*"You,,, are in our lives like a light in the darkness, like a bridge mounting the challenge of our lives while helping us with our education. You make us strong to stand on our own feet and to work for a better career. It is by your very example, that is by your commitment to the poor and needy, that we can ultimately become someone who can think of helping others in society. You*

*have set a very valuable example for us. You are an inspiration to lend a helping hand to people and persons in need. You teach us to help others in their need and command our unselfishness. We do admire you and every effort of yours for spreading the light of education. If you would not have been in our lives most probably, like thousands of selfish people, we would also have been confined by all our needs. What can we return to you for all the valuable help you have provided us? We assure you that we study well. We pray that God will protect you, guide you, inspire you and bring your dream of world literacy to realisation."*

Deepshieka

(20 years old, FreeSchools Scholar, 3rd year Honours Zoology, Patna Women's College)

**Robert:** Hi Ian, Perhaps we should try and post their speeches on our website? I hope that all is going well with you in the New Year?

**Rita Schaad:** Dear Robert, that is really touching. What do I do to sponsor another child? I saw on the website the 'donation' button - but is it different when you sponsor another student?

**Robert:** The "donation" button is for general donations for running the FreeSchools. Individual student scholarships come directly into the FSWL-Australia bank account (by cheque made out to FreeSchools World Literacy or by internet transfer) and I send them off to Sister Crescence in India to administer. They are \$72 per year (or perhaps a bit more this year). The following students have no personal sponsors in Australia as yet, so you can pick one of these below.

Kind regards and many thanks for your thoughtful generosity,

Liza Benedict (girl 7 years)

Mr Ashok Benedict is a man of small means. He lost his father at age 5, and his widowed mother brought him up and educated him to secondary school level. He married and had 3 daughters - the second youngest one is Liza aged 6 years. Liza's father is a teacher in a non-formal private Catholic school and his total salary is Rs. 1500, and with this he has to maintain his Christian family of 5 members. Liza is a student at St Aloysius, Pattishala. Given the present financial condition of the family, Liza is recommended by the Parish Priest of Bettiah for financial help/scholarship.

Mariyan Benedict (girl 8 years)

Mr Ashok Benedict is a man of small means. He lost his father at age 5, and his widowed mother brought him up and educated him to secondary school level. He married and had 3 daughters - the eldest one is Liza aged 7 years. Maryan's father is a teacher in a non-formal private Catholic school and his total salary is Rs. 1500, and with this he has to maintain his Christian family of 5 members. For Kindergarten and year one Mariyan was at St Aloysius, Pattishala, and she is now a student at St Stanislaus Mission Middle School, Patishala. Given the present financial condition of the family, Mariyan is recommended by the Parish Priest of Bettiah for financial help/scholarship.

Nikita Rai (girl age about 11)

Nikita Rai is the only daughter of Remy Rai and Daya Nidhi, residents of Varansi. At age 3, Nikita Rai received severe burns (60%) and her right hand was severely damaged. She is a student of Class 8 in an English Medium School at Varansi. Nikita's father is an assistant librarian in a private school earning Rs. 5000 per month for the upkeep of the family. The parents are worried about Nikita Rai's future and an application has come to me requesting for some help with her studies, and I recommend her for your kind consideration.

**Gerri Johnson:** Glad you and your daughters received the pictures. Thank you for creating the pdf file and sending it out. Rita mentioned seeing the FreeSchools news feature on TV and then Sue sent me the video link. It was well done.

**Rita:** Thanks for sending me the profiles of these girls. I like to sponsor the two Benedict girls. Please let me know what I need to do now!

**Robert:** Dear Sister Crescence/ Mary Elise, I have found a personal sponsor who would like to sponsor both of the Benedict children. I have also have been contacted by an Australian high school student who would like to write to, and sponsor a student. Preferably she would like to write to somebody of her own age of about 16-17. Perhaps Nikita Rai might be a good candidate (how old is she now?), however I will leave that



decision for you. This would mean that all of the scholarship students on my current list now have personal sponsors. Kind regards and many thanks for your continued work,

**Judy:** That is so wonderful Robert. It is so much better when there is a personal connection. What a great scheme. Jo and I saw three lovely girls that went to the night school that they ran in the church. We really hope that they will get a scholarship this year to go to High school. Obviously northern Thailand would benefit from the same sponsorship plan. It is fantastic.

**Robert:** Yes, these FSWL scholarships are a wonderful opportunity, but they do require some organizing and administering by a dedicated individual in the receiving country. In India it is becoming harder for Sister Crescence to manage this as the number of schools grow. We can discuss all of this and how it can work in Thailand when I see you on the weekend.

**Robert:** Dear Sue, In your 2009 update you mention the total for India and Thailand, "We are now supporting 74 FreeSchools and over 90 teachers and supervisors" For the statistics, what does this translate to in terms of total numbers of students being taught at the open of 2009?

**Sue:** The number 74 was based on last November's information. But it is impossible to visit all the schools in one visit to verify exact numbers of schools and students. You'd think this would be easy information to get but dealing in Thai and Hindi (with only one translator in each case) and trying to connect with so many children in such a short period of time makes precise information difficult. You may remember that I visited Sr. C last March /April specifically to nail down the facts but I still have many questions. Actually I could do a better job of this if this was my only focus.

The number of FreeSchool students will reduce in Thailand at the beginning of the next school year as government-paid teachers take over. I don't know at this point how many schools will remain funded by FSWL and how many new ones will be created (we agreed up to a maximum of 5 this year). I estimate that there will be approximately 400 hilltribe/mixed ethnic kids that we'll be funding.

There were several schools (tailoring centres are also considered a FreeSchool) visited in Bihar that need to be split and a second teacher hired - I think 5, increasing the number of FreeSchools to 48 (but I'm not sure about the schools we missed in Muzaffarpur). One teacher seems to manage 50 kids although daily attendance is not 100%. (48 FreeSchools x 50 kids = 2400 (predominantly Dalit) kids.

ISPCK's schools south of Delhi and in UP number 14. (14 FreeSchools x 50 kids = 700 (predominantly Muslim) kids.

For fundraising and budgetary purposes I count a FreeSchool as a teacher and a class that can be funded for as little as \$1500/year in Bihar. In Thailand the cost is \$3000/year. The cost for ISPCK FreeSchools is also \$3000/year but includes infrastructure, some they have rented and some they have purchased. (The reason for this is there are little or no trees in these villages and therefore no shade.)

Last year, we only managed 40% funding of ISPCK schools, but they are thrilled nevertheless.

Theoretically, our costs for funding FreeSchools operations in 2009-2010 are \$138K. That's not our entire budget. Costs of scholarships are not included. This year, we must add 20% for administration (required by Revenue Canada). We have the added cost of a vehicle (driver, fuel, maintenance and insurance) and finishing the dormitory in Banuchapar. Last year we raised \$128,000, plus Saskia's funds. But my plan is to talk to Rotary Clubs - to hopefully replace the revenues lost from Silver Springs by at least 20 clubs each sponsoring a FreeSchool. I'm also confident in the potential of FSWL-Australia to generate funds for Thailand. It would be great if we could collectively raise \$200K this year!

We are just beginning to incorporate FreeSchools World Literacy - USA. as a 501(3)(c). My brother in law in San Francisco has agreed to do it, Robert Burns, the former president of the Fellowship, and Michelle Klimesh (Pipeline of Light) have agreed to be on the Board. I'm hoping

John Lange has the time to join as well. It's interesting how the Urantia connections still remain strong. This is probably more information than you wanted but I felt more detail was required.

## 6. General Business.

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

### **FSWL Charitable Status**

**Sue:** It seems a lot time for FSWL-Australia to have waited for charitable tax status. Is it two years? We are going to need it when the public hears about FreeSchools. Is there anyway you can get some action going on this. Has anyone called lately to explain why we need it now?

**Robert:** We had our FSWL-Australia Formation Meeting in June 2007 when the first Committee of Management was appointed, so that means that we have been officially in existence for one and a half years now. We have had our first AGM at which our accounts were tabled and 16 monthly meetings to date. Ian Esmore has submitted those AGM documents to the ATO as proof of our reputability and proof that we are capable of meeting our annual legal requirements. I spoke to Ian yesterday and he is about to submit a further series of documents to the ATO on our behalf - The grant of Charitable Status to organizations in Australia is not taken lightly because of the scope for abuse. I have asked Ian to give us an idea as to how long he expects the process to take.

**Sue:** I seem to recall reading that FSWL-AU raised \$12,000 last year. Is this correct and how did you do it without tax status. Did you find people didn't care about it?

**Robert:** The figure of \$12,969 is the total that we have sent to India since 2001. Shortly, I will be sending a bank draft for about \$800 to Sister Crescence. All of our donations to the present time have been made by private individuals who are not really concerned about tax deductibility. I write each of our donors a personal letter of thanks from the President for the amount and tell them that I will send them out an official tax receipt that they can claim in their tax return as soon as we receive charitable status.

**Sue:** Have you made arrangements with your bank to accept credit cards?

**Robert:** Donors in Australia have been giving me personal cheques or transferring funds directly into our bank account

Bank Name: Westpac  
Account Name: FreeSchools World Literacy  
BSB and Account No: 032-196 26-6690

I can turn on the credit card facility at any time, but have not yet done so as we have not had the demand and there is a fee. Ian is also investigating the costs of using PayPal (which people know is a very safe way of paying online). So far we are proud to be able to claim that every cent of what people donate goes overseas to the students (no admin losses or fees). We have been able to do that because Ian and I have been carefully paying for the fees ourselves as they come along therefore leaving all external donations free.

**Sue:** We will go live with our new website the end of February and will have an Australian page. I will run it by you first for input and approval. Do you have a website already and can we link to it? Right now we will have people send cheques and money orders to the FreeSchools address in Sydney (yours I think) but if donors want to donate on line by credit card, they will

have to go through our "Donate now.." page. We will give them instructions as to how to do this simply and tag these monies in a separate Aussie account on etapestry.

**Robert:** Our Australian website has been set up by Ian, but it is still in its infancy at only one page. Ian plans to put up our 2009 newsletter shortly. We secured the same domain name as you, but with an .au at the end. It is <http://www.freeschools.org.au> There is also a button which links directly to the Canadian site and therefore accesses all of your detailed information and your "Donate Now" button.

If you have prepared a more professional page for us, perhaps we should be using that, but I suggest liaising with Ian on that matter as we should be maintaining the domain name <http://www.freeschools.org.au> that we were able to secure in Australia.

**Sue:** As Judy and another teacher (Linda Alcorn) are planning to work together on small fundraisers that won't require tax receipts, I'm going to have some business cards printed up for Judy as "Volunteer Coordinator". Does that sound OK to you? I will also put contact information for Judy on our new Australian webpage as she is willing to answer questions on the Thai schools and explain to people how they can volunteer, what we need and how to host a fundraiser. We need \$3000 to open a new FreeSchools and we intend to open 5 this year. That is in addition to our ongoing financial commitments to the other Thai schools.

**Robert:** Three cheers for Judy our new Volunteer Coordinator and human dynamo. This is going to be fabulous. We have the team and all of the AV materials (PowerPoint CD etc) to give a memorable 30 min to 1 hr presentation to any interested party (school, church group, Lions, Probus, etc) at a moment's notice. We have proven that each time we do it that people are touched by the cause and will donate. We need someone who has the time to tee up groups that are interested in hearing about our mission.

**Sue:** I'm sure you'll have suggestions (hopefully even better) that I haven't thought of but I am stressing the urgency of getting this organized as soon as possible. All our time, effort and expense would have been wasted if we do not have a proper organized response to public interest and generosity. I'm sure you understand.

**Robert:** Bravo, Sue. We are ready for the action!

## **FSWL Australian Website and Communications**

**Ian:** I did make some enquiry with my colleagues re online payment methods for collection of donor monies to the FSWL account and that I would check up on current status of other providers for inexpensive and acceptable process of financial transactions. I am currently registered with PayPal for EBay transactions and this is a recent email sent from them. Late last year I did some research and it appears that PayPal are quite acceptable within the IT user industry and growing fast. My use with them has been fairly straightforward. I would be interested in any other FSWL member comment.

**Robert:** Thanks for that information. How much do they charge you for the service? We need to find out how much they will charge us, and whether they will support us as a charity by giving us special rates? Thank you very much for your report on the PayPal system, and also for your continued focus on the legal aspects of attaining charitable status.

**Merindi:** I have an existing PayPal account - that I never use. I've just upgraded my personal account to a "business" account, and registered it as FreeSchools World Literacy Australia. I have linked the FreeSchools Westpac bank account to this paypal account. There is more to do, and I need to get my head around how paypal works, but we've made the first step. There is no cost to this service - as Ian mentioned, we only pay when people pay using this

method. This will allow us to accept credit card payments - I agree with Ian we need to support this 'impulse' donor.

**Sue:** Dear Mins, Good work! You're brilliant and I miss you

**Ian:** Follow-up from Meridi setting up payment option. To give you an example of PayPal in operation for donor groups, coincidentally I recently gave a small donation to someone who had their cause registered under "everydayhero". The payment choice was either Credit Card OR PayPal, either way a small percentage is extracted in the order of approximately 1.5 to 2.5%. However the simplicity for the donor impulse to respond is of no consequence to the recipient who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to receive their gift. There is a link below for someone to explore how the "everydayhero" web site works. There may be an opportunity to have FSWL sponsored on this website which could be one way of expanding FSWL efforts and provide an immediate link to donations. Though strategically it may be preferable to get the website updated before this outreach. Does someone have any spare time to surf this info and give feedback to the group.?

**Robert:** I had a quick look at "everydayhero" which is quite an ingenious site. They rely on being more well known than many a fledgling charity, so if a potential donor stumbles across their site instead of the charity's own website (and they don't get the thought of using Google to find the Charity's home page in order to make the donation directly through that) - then in that way "everydayhero" gets its cut as follows (listed in their terms and conditions)

*"We take a small 6.5% administration fee from the gross donation made to your charity. We also pass on a credit card processing fee of 1.1% of the gross donation plus 30 cents per transaction. Following a 3 month free introductory period, we charge partner charities a monthly hosting fee of \$30 plus GST."*

I am not really keen, however, on cutting into FSWL donors funds, even in the slightest way. There are too many groups around supporting themselves with their ingenious ideas in the publicity stakes and taking small cuts off the top (which in some cases are not even all that small!)- and, in the end all that this serves to do is to upset the donor (when they hear about the worst high profile cases in a media beat-up - often coupled with stories of misuse of funds in the destination country). This kind of negative publicity, in fact, can eventually cause many people build a barrier, or excuse, against donating any of their hard-earned money to charity at all!!! In many cases I am told this same story by potential donors and I can answer -

"Well, that's why in 2000, after visiting India, I decided to set up my own charity to make sure that every single cent reaches the donor country - and isn't it interesting that in this way only \$18 of your Australian money can stretch to giving a poor child in India an education for a whole year in ....."

You are right though, whatever we do should be after we have our updated web page and FSWL-Australia has registered charity status.

**Saskia Raevouri:** I have been using Paypal for years to raise money via my website.

Here are the steps:

1. Open a Paypal account linked to the FreeSchools bank account and an authorized representative's (Merindi's) email address.
2. Go to the Paypal.com website and create a button for your product/service/donation. This is done by filling in some blanks which generate an html code.
3. Copy and paste the code into the place on the web page where you want it to be.
4. When you publish the page the button will look like this (see left column):  
[http://www.squarecircles.com/articles/freeschools2007/fundraising\\_report.htm](http://www.squarecircles.com/articles/freeschools2007/fundraising_report.htm)  
You might want to try clicking on one of my DONATE buttons to see what comes up.
5. When a donation is made by someone, Merindi will instantly receive and email alerting her that funds have been received.
6. In my case, since SquareCircles.com is not a charity, I have the code on my website linked to the bank account for Mind, Body and Spirit, Inc., legally a church, and they handle receiving the money and sending out tax receipts for people in the United States. (MBS is a group of Urantia

Book readers in Tallahassee FL, who are doing this as a service for FreeSchools, and who are also very generously swallowing the Paypal fees, which come out at their end!)

7. Once a code is generated, it can be published on any website and donations from all over the world will wind up in your CYBER bank account, which, with one or two mouse clicks, can be transferred into your PHYSICAL bank account. I hope this helps!

**Merindi:** I've been asked to provide the attached information to Paypal. Do you think you could help get this organised for me? I'm assuming you have a recent bank statement and/or voided cheque you could give me to scan and upload? We also need a copy of our not-for-profit registration (did you email this to me once ... ?). I will write a statement re: their third point. Until we get this information to them they have restricted our account - not that that matters too much considering there are no funds coming in there yet. How are you anyway? Hopefully you can drop in sometime soon. Do you want to come around for dinner or lunch this weekend? We're free most of the weekend and would love to see you.

**Robert:** Hi Kathleen, I received the FSWL Bank Statement for January and am pleased to report that your regular direct debit monthly donation entered the account on January 27. As I mentioned before, it marks the first of this kind of regular automatic donation into our account. Essentially, every month you are sponsoring another poor child into FreeSchools for a year of education. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness.

**Ian:** The website needs some work done fairly urgently as the single page entry definitely needs to go onto a second page which can have all our local links to stories, brochure, Aus donations etc. I am still under some time pressure and may be able to sort a bit of my office work leaving an opening towards end of week. If there was anyone else with IT skills it could certainly facilitate to make a start on webpage development.

**Robert:** Yes, I think we will all have to keep our eyes peeled for an charitable IT type who may be able to assist with the building of our Australian Web Page. I would rather spread the work load in this way, as you have already donated significant amounts of your spare time (and money), Ian, in incorporating FreeSchools World Literacy and preparing the organization for charitable status registration. Kind regards and thanks,

**Robert:** Hi Saskia, Thanks very much for joining our Australian meeting and taking the time to make those succinct and useful comments about getting our PayPal button up and running. Much appreciated. Ian, Merindi, Perhaps we should use that advice get that button up and running on our website - but Sue also said that she was preparing an Australian Web Page for us (obviously with very skilled IT help)

## **FSWL Publicity**

**Betty:** Yes, I am still around. Sorry I haven't been in touch but it is taking much longer than I anticipated getting myself going again. After a house full of 'family' over the Christmas holidays I somehow got myself run down again and was laid low with what I thought was a head cold, but turned out to be a touch more,

Firstly I want to thank you Robert and the rest of the Board for accepting me onto the Board of FSWL I hope I can be of some help. I have been reading the newsletters which have so kindly been sent to me and which have kept me up to date with recent activities of FSWL. The Thailand problem concerns me. I was of the understanding that FSWL only provided assistance to the very disadvantaged and poor children. As has also been mentioned, I believe that it is up to the Government to provide for those 'other' needy children wanting an education. Robert, my concern is very real. I understand full well that there are many children throughout the world who are in real need. My husband and I have, over past years supported programs and sponsored such children in that position. However, I believed that FSWL was concentrating on specifically

'girls' in remote villages who have been disowned or forgotten. Please correct me if I have got the story wrong.

I have set out a plan for fund raising here in the Huon Valley and am aiming to get started in February. To date it involves morning teas; and some other fund raising events I have in mind. I also want FSWL to get involved with schools and have set out a program which I would like to introduce, if yourself, the rest of the Board and the Principal of the schools approve. (see attachment). It is important, however, that I know exactly how FSWL operates before I start any project. I have been reading up about FREESCHOOLS on the Web which gives some information, but on receiving the latest news from yourself, Sue and Judy there seems to be other aspects which now need to be sorted out.

It was wonderful hearing about the Channel 9 coverage. Congratulations to those making it possible. Unfortunately, I was too late to view it, but I'm sure any publicity concerning our cause would be great for FSWL.

Robert, I am needing brochures, etc. I have my first tea party booked for the 3rd week in Feb. Could you send me a.s.a.p any info that will publicise FSWL – notices; newsletters, DVD etc. Also if you have any suggestions, ideas. What are others doing for fundraising in Aust ? Etc.

Many thanks and best wishes for a GREAT year for all of us.

Would you also note that I now have 'my own' email address for communications purposes ... this is [bettyjl65@gmail.com](mailto:bettyjl65@gmail.com)

**Ian:** Good luck Betty.

This email is an apology from myself for the inability to contribute to this meeting. Yesterday was our hottest day in history in Victoria with wind gusts 50-80 km/hr most of the day and there were fires in surrounding areas. Isobel and I live in the bush surrounded by 25 plus metres tall native gums. Literally they are metres from our doorstep. Also to compound things I have a Tribunal hearing in Melbourne all day tomorrow which has taken any spare time and energy. my apologies.

**Betty:** Dear Robert, Many thanks for the Freeschools discs and for all your help. I am a bit of a novice with my new computer. Yesterday I sent off an email to yourself and Merindi, but I must have pressed a wrong key as when I looked to see if it had gone, I couldn't find it. So I hope you will all be patient with me. I have emailed Merindi with this same message thanking her also. I will keep you posted about my morning and afternoon teas. Once again, many thanks,

**Robert:** Everyone's thoughts have been with the people living in the forested areas to the north of Melbourne who have been suffering so much in the last few days. I was checking where the fire fronts were in relation to Daylesford this evening, and also hoping that the cool change, due this evening, had improved conditions for the firefighters. The speed and intensity of the fires, fanned by the hot winds, have been catching even the most seasoned fire-ready citizens off guard, so I hope that you have a number of well-laid evacuation plans ready in case of emergency.

**Robert:** I have looked at your fund raising plan for Franklin Primary School, Betty - it is a brilliant piece of work. My own primary school aged kids have got a great deal of value from writing to their FreeSchools penpals including sending and receiving of drawings. I am circulating your plan to the Committee. Attached is an image of my kids and their penpals. I use it when talking about the penpals and FSWL scholarships.

**Sue:** I have an updated brochure and can send a few hundred for people doing fundraisers. You could have a sticker made to put your own address on. Please send me that mailing address again and I'll send them as soon as I'm better (got really sick on my way home).

**Robert:** I was just thinking about printing some material for Betty's Fundraiser and Jo and Judy's function. These will be most useful: Our Australian Address is:  
FreeSchools World Literacy - Australia

Dr. Robert Coenraads - President  
8 Trigalana Place  
Frenchs Forest NSW 2086  
Please take care and get better soon.

**Ian:** In response this email for inclusion of contact detail; whatever is sent to include www. . plus phone and ABN. You may want to check final artwork in all cases and the very least, we should have an ink stamp if not a standardised A4 L/H plus Fax etc. Colour plus B&W version. Everything must be in hardcopy plus PDF format that is systematic in look and print version to reflect FSWL image consistently and with ABN plus "how do we find you or talk". Has all this been looked into?

**Merindi:** I've just emailed our good friend, Pete, who Bernie is working for, to ask if his business would like to support FreeSchools Australia with free printing. I'm pretty sure he's going to say yes, but I can't guarantee just yet. I suggested we could put a "special thanks to HOGAN PRINT ([www.hoganprint.com.au](http://www.hoganprint.com.au)) for supporting FreeSchools Australia" or similar on the back of the brochure and newsletter. Vern - we may need your assistance with design and layout if you are willing. Pete has his own designers, and it may be simpler if they handle the whole thing, but he might want us to supply the artwork ready-for-print. I'll let you know what he says. Judy - at minimum, I'm confident we'll have business cards done for you by the 22nd, so don't go looking for a printer in Bateau Bay. We'll bring them up with us. Hopefully along with some beautifully printed brochures, or newsletters.

**Sue:** This is wonderful news. Thank you so much for taking this initiative. I'm not sure if I sent you the most recent brochure but here it is for your consideration. You are welcome to edit as needed - entirely at your discretion.

Just so you know, FSWL-USA will be incorporating this month and it takes about 6 months to get charitable status. Derek's brother (a US citizen living in San Francisco) is willing to take us to this important next stage. The Board members are names many of you would recognize. As we build the network of those interested in FreeSchools World Literacy we can be very thankful that others strongly feel the call of this mission. A US television documentary team is interested in documenting FreeSchools in 2010. It may not be until 2011 that this is aired but we need to have the charitable structure in place to handle the public response.

Thank you for your stalwart support and let's pray you get charitable status soon.

**Robert:** Brilliant Mins!! Thanks for your efforts. Yes, Hogan Print should be gratefully acknowledged for any support given on all the hand-out material and, in return, they would benefit in the longer term by the free publicity - public exposure of their good deeds.

This is how a charity should really work, and all it takes is a little bit of thought and organizational effort and kind charitable people - thank you again Bernie and Merindi for your thoughtful work. It is like a growing groundswell. Can you imagine the whole world working in this way for the betterment of the entire planet and its peoples!

**Merindi:** Thank you so much for offering to help us with FreeSchools - that is wonderful. Two things I was wondering if I could ask .

1. Brochure

I've attached Sue's current Canadian brochure they are using. Ian has managed to strip out the Canadian specific components, and I've attached his stripped out version. Basically, we need to Australian-ise it. It needs to have our Australian contact details (Robert - could you confirm these for Vern?), and our Australian bank account details in the "how to donate" section. Any other improvements you'd like to do to the design would be welcomed.

This one is relatively urgent as we'd like to try and get some brochures printed up for Judy's fundraiser - planned for 22nd Feb. We may be cutting this fine, so don't worry if you run late, we'll just get some run on the laser printer.

2. Newsletter

I've attached Robert's annual newsletter, which he's put together on Word. My friend Pete has offered for one of his designers to put together a newsletter template (header / footer, the 'shell') and we can add content from edition to edition. Or alternatively, you could do the same thing for us. Let me know what you'd prefer.

This one isn't urgent as I don't think it's realistic to get this done for Judy's newsletter. Thank you, thank you, thank you. With loads of love.

**Peter Hogan:** Hi Mins, We'd be happy to help with your FreeSchools printing. The business card is only a little job. We can sneak that through with no charge. Are there any other cards needed – perhaps one for yourself?? We're also happy to help out with the newsletter. First thing would be to develop a template for the layout, including the banner on the front page. Brad could do this without a problem / or you could ask your friend. The typesetting of each issue might be best done by your friend. Give me a call if you want to discuss anything. Love Pete xx

**Robert:** Hi Pete, We really do appreciate your support with this FreeSchools World Literacy charity work – every bit of support really helps those poor kids. Don't forget to put your printery name somewhere on the card with some message like, "Hogan Printers ( contact details) proudly supports the charity work of FreeSchools World Literacy" or something similar My card will have [www.freeschools.org.au](http://www.freeschools.org.au) (note don't forget the addition of the .au for the Australian website which displays all of our local details first)  
Dr Robert Coenraads  
President - FreeSchools World Literacy  
8 Trigalana Place  
Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086;  
(02) 9451 8496; [coenraads01@optusnet.com.au](mailto:coenraads01@optusnet.com.au). Kind regards and many thanks,

**Vern:** Hi Merindi, I've updated the information in the brochure and attached is a proof PDF. The artwork is basically the same as the PDF you provided just set up for A4 folded to DL rather than US letter which it was. If you want any additional design input let me know. At present it has no bleed (no ink goes beyond the edge of the page). I can imagine one of the panels being a solid colour with white text. If you want a design variation let me know. One inconsistency I noticed, Rob put [www.freeschools.org.au](http://www.freeschools.org.au) as his web address but the brochure features [www.freeschools.org](http://www.freeschools.org) as the web address.

**Robert:** Hi Judy, Sounds like things are coming along well for your fund raiser on Sunday the 22nd, congratulations on your efforts. I would love to lend my services by coming along to mingle with your guests, chatting with them about the history and background of FreeSchools etc. I can have my daughters bring along their folder of letters, photos and drawings from their FSWL Scholarship Pen Pals in Bihar, India. I can also bring along a copy of my book, "Natural Disasters and How We Cope" for raffle or auction [R.Retail P. \$80], if you like. Let me know if there is any other way I can help? Have you as yet sent out the Address Details, Starting Time etc for the function?

**Judy:** How lovely! I have no idea how many people will be here. You can have the India perspective and Jo, Linda and I will have the Thai connection. Luckily you are bringing the girls because I think the boys will be outnumbered! Murray and another teacher from school are in charge of the coffee machines. Today we received movie tickets, Nutri Metics and the Skins voucher (athletics training leggings) for the raffle. I have to get the raffle tickets printed next week - couldn't do it earlier because I didn't actually have the vouchers in my hand. The quilt and the painting are both absolutely beautiful as well.

19 Lakin St Bateau Bay - any time between 2 - 5pm. Come early or late, stay as long or short a time as you please. The letters from the pen pals will be wonderful. See you soon

**Judy:** Dear Robert, The Lions Club of Killarney Vale want to give us \$1000 towards starting Huay Muang School but they need to know who to make out the cheque out to. I thought FreeSchools Australia but thought I had better check with you first. Obviously they will want a



receipt as well, so can you help me at the afternoon tea? I know that there are needs everywhere with FreeSchools but this cheque is specifically given to the Thailand school so I will need to add it to the total that we send off to Mirror to pay the salary of the new teacher. Very exciting when cheques of this size start to be offered. I didn't even approach them - they read about it in the paper. My Dad used to be in the Killarney Vale Lions but he has been dead for over 12 years now so i can't really claim any connection - they just loved the story in the paper. Hope this is Ok Judy

**Robert:** Dear Judy, That is excellent news! Cheques can be made out to "FreeSchools World Literacy". You can tally up all of the cheque and cash donations made on the day and I will deposit them all into the "FreeSchools World Literacy" Westpac bank account. I will then prepare an overseas bank draft for that amount made out to the Mirror Foundation, which you can send off to them by registered post. If they have an Australian bank account, then I don't need to make an overseas draft. I can write out donation receipts on the day and then when we achieve charitable status, I can send out formal tax deductible FSWL receipts to each donor.

**Sue:** Hi David, FreeSchools World Literacy - Australia is awaiting charitable tax status and is gearing up to do two fundraisers the end of this month. They need our FreeSchools brochure and business cards, but adapted to their own addresses and donor methods. Merindi, the treasurer, has successfully persuaded a printer in Sydney to donate the redesign and printing but he says he can't work with a pdf and is asking for us to send the original artwork files and fonts. David, they need this as soon as possible. It would be wonderful if you could send this directly to the printer on my behalf. The printer is Peter: peter@hoganprint.com.au. Thank you so much for your help.

**Sue:** I am so taken aback by the enormous affect of the bushfires in Victoria. Such a terrible tragedy for so many people. I pray that the fires suddenly stop and that the stricken communities are strengthened in good will, spirit and new creativity and cooperation. For so many people, our world is a tough place to live in.

**Yvonne Hirt:** Dear Sue, Thank you for your kind message - I was lucky enough to be on a seminar in Melbourne however, some of the attendees returned on the Sunday and we found out they had lost their houses the day before. We had no idea on the Saturday of how bad things were. I remember during our break we all went outside and it was 47 degrees and the wind was so strong you had to shield your eyes from the heat and dust. The beautiful duo, Sacred Earth played for us on Saturday and returned on Sunday to play again and devoted their songs to the victims and the wildlife. We meditated/prayed during the intervals between songs - a deeply moving time with many tears being shed. We all prayed for rain. It wasn't until the end of the conference that we became aware that Sacred Earth, our beautiful duo had lost their home and belongings in the fire on the Saturday. They hadn't said a word about it and had come back to share their music and meditation. Almost everyone you meet in Melbourne knows of someone who has been affected by the tragedy. All of us have shed tears and every time you think about it, more tears fall. Thanks again for your kind wishes and prayers, Bless you, Yvonne

## 7. Correspondence with Supporters and Donors

**Sue:** I think this donor is a direct result of publicity in Australia. The money has gone into our account. We will start tagging Australian donors who will continue to use the freeschools.org website to donate online and send you the data. I think it would be a good idea if you revise the attached FreeSchools letterhead with the Australian coordinates and send a thank you letter from FSWL-Australia. That way you can build a relationship with this donor, Let me know if you think this will work. Love, Sue

Congratulations FreeSchools World Literacy! You have just received an online entry. The following record has been automatically added to your eTapestry database.

Salutation: Ms.  
Account Name: Melissa Alldis  
First Name: Melissa  
Middle Name:  
Last Name: Alldis

**Robert:** That's fabulous, thank you very much for those important donor details. I have taken the opportunity to ring Melissa today to thank her personally for her donation to FSWL. You were correct, she had seen Joanna Townsend reporting from Thailand, and felt moved to make a donation (thank you all for your brilliant efforts and now FSWL is reaping the rewards).

She appreciated the personal thanks and FSWL background explanation, and really wants to help the young charity in any way, so I will meet up with her in the next little while and go over some of the possibilities. For example, she will also be one of the first people that I advise about Judy's fund raising event when the details are finalized. Here is my email to Melissa

*Hi Melissa,*

*Thank you again for your kind donation to FreeSchools World Literacy. It is only through the thoughtfulness of people such as you that FreeSchools is able to provide an education to the poorest of the poor, and especially girls who are often the most disadvantaged in these countries. To give you an idea of just how far your donation will go - in India, it will provide a year's basic education, about 2-3 hours per day, for 6 students.*

*It was nice to have the opportunity to personally catch up today on the phone, and I really appreciate your offer to help our fledgling FreeSchools charity in whatever way you can. There is so much opportunity.*

*I am attaching our FreeSchools World Literacy 2008 Newsletter for you to read through, and then we can chat again and catch up.*

**Melissa:** Thanks for your call the other night. It's great to speak to someone who has so much passion about helping others. I am also passionate about doing something to help children in Third World countries and wasn't sure how I could get involved, so your phone call was warmly welcomed, especially because you live so close. And I also like the fact that your charity is still small all of the money gets to the destination

I notice myself being more frugal in my spending so that I can donate more. Please let me know how I can become involved. I would like to sponsor a child and notice that you have a committee - what is involved in becoming a member of the committee?

**Robert:** Hi Melissa, Thank you for your enthusiasm for the concept of FreeSchools World Literacy. We can organize it so that you can sponsor an individual child for scholarship in either Thailand or India, and, yes, the FSWL Committee has worked hard to ensure that all of the precious donor funds make it to the children that need them (to the extent of members taking on various incidental costs out of their own pocket).

I feel that there is inherently something wrong with the concept of setting up a donation-reliant charitable structure for a good cause, but where the infrastructural running costs soak up large proportions of donor funds (sometimes even the majority!). Some charities do operate in this way and justify it by saying that at least something is getting to the needy. But when you think about it, such wasteful use is blatantly disrespectful to the graciously-given donations of hard-working individuals like yourself. Donations are not an infinite resource there to be milked, but a limited valuable pool to be respected, and there is never even nearly enough for every worthy cause - so bleeding them out wastefully by one organization will ultimately lead to another missing out.

If you were to become a member of our Australian Committee, Melissa, then you would take part in our regular monthly electronic meetings, and be able to follow and contribute to the discussions going back and forth. Practically, you will hear news of, and be able to participate in, various fundraiser events.

I would be pleased to nominate you for membership into our Committee of Management, and will formally put it to the Committee Members to vote on your admission.

**Melissa:** I would love to become involved with FreeSchools. I would like to meet up one day to discuss what I could possibly do to help and have the honour of meeting you. It is inspirational what you are doing. This would hopefully give you more confidence in including me in the committee. I have been praying that a door would open up to me to enable me to help children in Third World Countries and then you called.

I work full time but could make some time as I work at Frenchs Forest, perhaps in my lunch break or after work. How does 4.15pm on a Wednesday afternoon sound? We could catch up for a coffee and discuss the charity.

**George Risk:** I have seen a TV report in Sydney Australia, I am booked to visit Bangkok in March and would like to know more about your operation in Thailand. Please let me know by email or call me on skype risk.george or on the numbers below Ta. George Risk  
+61(0)415688001; +612 87460923

**Rod:** Dear freeschools  
Changing men's thinking is the key to changing the plight of women.  
I saw a program on TV about your work in Thailand. It seemed pretty cool, so I went to the site. I got a bit annoyed when I read the line 'Women are our future, our teachers and leaders'. I mean, I agree with the UN thing - the best way to tackle poverty is to educate women. True enough. But, being a teacher, I get annoyed by the assertion that men cannot be teachers or leaders, and that we are not necessary for the future. I suggest you change this line as it put me off reading the rest of your site. What about 'Women are vital to our future, and play key roles in teaching and leadership?' Cheers, Reader

**Sue:** You wrote, "But, being a teacher, I get annoyed by the assertion that men cannot be teachers or leaders, and that we are not necessary for the future. What about 'Women are vital to our future, and play key roles in teaching and leadership?'"

Thanks for visiting our FreeSchools site. I know it's old and we're redoing it but I very much appreciated your taking the time to comment. I agree that the writing should be improved.

As enlightened Westerners, we don't value one gender more than another but rather appreciate that both (in cooperation) are necessary because the differences and gender strengths maximize our chances for progress, especially in education. But that is not the case in traditional, impoverished villages of rural Asia. That's the main reason they are so backward. They don't realize and therefore cannot value or encourage the inherent strengths of women. In the areas we work, women are treated like property and the abuse of women and children is horrific - beyond imagination. For the last four years we have been able to hire only two male teachers because parents would only trust their children with women. Sexual abuse is rampant. Also men are so conditioned to corruption that they would not hesitate to take a portion of the salary of our poor female teachers through outright intimidation.

Women simply need extra encouragement because they generally prove to be more sympathetic to children and that kindness, when given support, eventually translates into better community. That's why we say, 'Women are our future, our teachers and leaders'. The world is in a mess and we need more civilized behaviour to dig our way out. Please stay in touch. We appreciate that you have an interest. Best regards,

**Robert:** A very nicely worded reply, Sue

**Rod:** Good on you Sue. I really enjoyed watching the show about your organization. Inspirational, thanks for your feedback. I will certainly be making a donation. Rod

**Kerri:** Hi My name is Kerri and I have just looked through your website. Your program sounds amazing - well done!!!

I have recently returned to Australia after volunteering in Swaziland, Africa. My partner and I are keen to return to Africa in the near future to work with communities on projects and were wondering if Free Schools has ever considered doing similar work in Africa? Thank you

## 8. 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 6<sup>th</sup> March to Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2009.

I would like to thank the Committee of Management for all of its efforts

END OF MINUTES

### APPENDIX REPORTS

#### **The FSWL Committee - Australian Contact Details**

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