

# **Third Meeting**

# FreeSchools World Literacy Australia

DATE commencing:	Friday	3rd August 2007	TIME: 9 am
DATE completion:	Sunday	5th August 2007	TIME: 9 pm

INTERNET VENUE: FreeSchools Literacy Australia email network <u>fswl-australia@googlegroups.com</u>

## **Minutes of the Meeting**

- 1. Rollcall of members present and apologies.
  - There were 10 participants in attendance Robert Coenraads (President) Ben Bowler (Vice President) Ian Esmore (Public Officer) Delphine Swadling (Secretary) Merindi Swadling (Treasurer) Donna Cervantes (Committee Member) Kathleen Swadling (Committee Member) Yvonne Hirt (Committee Member) Sue Tennant Jildou Brower
- 2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the July 6-8, 2007 Second Meeting were sent to each member of the committee and accepted by the committee Moved by Yvonne Hirt and Seconded by Ben Bowler

3. Reports from the Committee.

No reports.

- Progress in Thailand. A copy of Ben and Jildou's July 2007 reports from Thailand were sent out to all participants.
- 5. Progress in India

No report

6. General Business.

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

- i. The FSWL Australian Annual Newsletter
- ii. PowerPoint presentation for FSWL Australia
- iii. Police Checks for FSWL Committee Members and others working with Children

#### The FSWL Australian Annual Newsletter

**Robert**: "I have been studying the concept of preparing an Australian newsletter /brochures for our promotional work. These would be something to give out in addition to the newsletter prepared by Sue. Quite effective and powerful newsletters are those prepared annually by St Vincent de Paul Society, Australia (Assist a Student Program). One of the former "Assist a Student" students came to our local church and handed out some of these newsletters, following her talk on "Assist a Student"

There are several criteria based on those newsletters and various others that I have been looking at. They must be:

- 1. Simple, easy to read, short and to the point
- 2. Cheap to print/photocopy non wasteful of paper

3. Standard information blocks (FSWL mission etc) that are repeated on each edition (say annual), plus interesting updates and news stories.

4. Non-time-consuming and easy for volunteers to prepare.

There are two types:

1. Annual newsletter (printed double sided onto an A3 sheet and folded in half to make a neat four page A4 sized document - just like Sue's FSWL newsletter)

2. A condensed leaflet (printed double sided onto an A4 sheet and folded in three to make a neat standard envelope sized leaflet). Easy to read summarized information. These can be produced and handed out in larger numbers, and easily mailed.

IMPORTANTLY - on each of these there would be (like on the St Vincent ones) a block entitled "Assist a Student Today" or "Yes! I would like to assist a student".

I have put together what might be a usable 2007 annual newsletter (see attached). It is in standard word format and so easy to read on the computer, and 4 pages long. I have simply dumped in everything that we have so far, plus the latest on all of the sponsored students.

Perhaps it is something that you might like to have a look at Yvonne, with your Microsoft Publisher program, in due course when we are ready to begin handing them out. Thank you very much for your earlier kind offer to do this.

Please, all, look at it for critical comment. It must be something you would be willing to hand out and discuss with potential donors.

**Ben**: The concept is good and your initial layout looks OK. FYI here in Thailand the sponsored students go the Government school not to a FreeSchool. We will calculate a dollar figure per year to subsidize a student here but it will vary from school to school. I would say it will be around \$100-150 per year. There maybe some other content issues but as an initial draught it looks very good.

lan: Thank you Robert for the draft letter.

a) I believe we should have an ABN before any newsletter is finally made public.

b) A 2007 newsletter is good. However I feel a brief quarterly newsletter could be a target for future outreach once we are more established. I think this approach would keep the subject more in members/public exposure.

c) A standardised format for newsletters is preferable and available in hardcopy and electronic format, PDF. In my community most groups have defaulted to electronic distribution for ease and cost effectiveness. Are you able to scan the front page of the St Vincent newsletter you are referring to?

d) A/4 page double sided. Easy and quick to read or distribute. Not too much detail. In relaying examples of students it may be better to profile a few rather than too many. For example a layout could encompass. Presidents message, photo plus paragraph of a student. An even briefer description of what/how FSWL works.

e) Enough to get interest. Rely on web site to give a lot more detail and the ability to donate direct on line. Pages of FAQ's etc.

The above are some thoughts.

#### Robert:

a) Yes, I agree Ian, St Vincent de Paul had their ABN on the newsletter. We must have everything in place before we move.

b) Quarterly news is very good for our electronic mail outs to an email list (clearly the way to go for cost minimisation), but an annual is also useful for printing and distribution of hard copy logistics. St Vincent's hardcopy is annual, and this one is used for first contact purposes (like a church or school or club visit), and for leaving pinned up on their notice boards.

c) The St Vincent's newsletter is a nice A4 printable document and accessible from their website <u>www.vinnies.org.au</u>, although it wasn't intuitive to me how to access their newsletters and archives, so I used Google and they are all there. Their Newsletters refer to the website, where it is also possible to donate on line - but there are still enough people about who are more comfortable with cheques in the mail to make the donor box an important thing to have.

**Yvonne:** Thanks for the information for the newsletter. I think having background and statistics makes for great reading for our first issue and answers a lot of questions for potential donors.

If our newsletter is to accompany Sue's - would we still be including photos. Reason I ask is purely from an editorial viewpoint - how would we be able to fit in on 4 pages if we provide photos? If we do opt for photos - then perhaps we could publish 1 or 2 stories on the kids who are on scholarships, per newsletter issue, then when full circle, could provide updates on their progress?

Otherwise I agree we may have to leave on website or provide separate leaflets on the kids - all food for thought - just some ideas.

**Robert:** Yes, I think it will be necessary to edit and shorten, and select certain case histories and photos as you suggest to exactly fit the available space. In this word version newsletter, I have simply put all of our information together, including every one of the student stories that I have.

**Donna:** The comment you made Yvonne: (If we do opt for photos - then perhaps we could publish 1 or 2 stories on the kids who are on scholarships, per newsletter issue, then when full circle, could provide updates on their progress?)...I consider this a good idea..the students I have talked to in Schools wish to see photos and success stories especially.

**Robert:** There has been some excellent discussion concerning building the material and resources needed for the way forward in terms of PowerPoint presentations, newsletters, and online material. We will continue to build up photographs and hone the material we have for Yvonne to format into the newsletter in due course.

We will need to consider how to go about constructing our Australian web page into which online donations can be received.

#### PowerPoint presentation for FSWL Australia

**Donna**: The information attached is very well written and very informative. I would like to encourage the making of a Power Point Presentation for FSWL. I agree that these comments Ian are important issues: Rely on web site to give a lot more detail and the ability to donate direct on line.

**Donna:** Robert I have been collecting all the best material, writing, photos, reports for additions to Educational material....the more variety to appeal to all tastes the better.....for a seminar or say a teacher(or other) staff meeting presentation...the DVD is very good but to support important points when speaking then a Power Point presentation is a good method. I will construct one and send it to you.

**Robert:** I agree Donna, a PowerPoint presentation is a very powerful. personalized and adaptable means of presenting information when speaking to groups. I use them for my geology lectures, and the more photos of exploding volcanoes, tsunamis and earthquakes the better for holding the student's attention. Thank you, for your offer to put together some slides of material that you think would be appropriate. I can then add the material that I have here and we should then have something that everyone can modify to their needs. PowerPoint files are quite massive in size if the integrity of the photographic material is maintained, so you will probably have to burn it onto a CD in order to send it to me.

#### Police Checks for FSWL Committee Members and others working with Children

lan: General Business topic.

Some questions for clarification.

Understanding the perception of how we may be viewed by peer groups or officialdom. Do we have any photos of individual students?

What are the protocols for publishing children's photos.?

I have got a Police Check underway for which any Australian is required to have if involved with children. This may not be necessary for overseas however is part of OZ working with young ones. Do we require this for a committee member?

**Robert**: This Police Check is a good idea, Ian. I had one done as a company director a few years back, but there is probably a different one for teachers and others working with children. Although it is not stated in our FSWL rules, perhaps we should all consider having one done as a matter of course. What is the procedure?

**Donna**: In Australia if you have any work that is related to children then you must have a Blue Card - a positive pass card to show a Police check....this is now legislation with the Child Protection Agency.... some places will let someone work with the application pending due to the delay in time with these however Schools request this as soon as you are on the grounds now...other countries request a form to be filled in to conduct a Police check...usually International such as the UK...one done in another country is not accepted in another country despite it being International. **Robert**: St Vincent's have a very strict privacy policy for their work with children. I incorporated their idea of the "frequently asked questions" from their 2006 and 2007 newsletters. Notice how they handle the communication with students and letter writing issue (with their obvious vastness of experience). This was exactly the issue I was just trying to come to grips with last meeting from a logistics point of view. The onus is on the sponsor to write, if they wish, and not on the student or third world workers to reply (this being done in the annual report), and the student's privacy is also carefully protected (important for when we grow larger and we don't know all of our donors personally). The person in charge of receiving mail could also check its content before passing any letters onto the students. Taking this leaf from their book will help us greatly. The St Vincent program has even more anonymity, but I do not (as yet) see any problem with allowing sponsors to write if they wish (It has been very positive for my own children's involvement and understanding).

I have photos of some of the children - St Vincent de Paul do publish photos of the children in their newsletters, but do not provide them to individual donors.

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

Meetings of the Committee of FSWL Australia will be the held on the first Friday of each month. The time next official meeting will be from Friday 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 9th of September, 2007.

The business of the meeting concluded on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2007

The Committee is thanked for its involvement

END OF MINUTES

## Appendix 1

## DRAFT ANNUAL AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

Annual Newsletter for 2007 Our mission is to break the cycle of ignorance and poverty through free education

"Study after study has taught us that there is no toll for development more effective than the education of girls and the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, or improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS." [former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, 2004]

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been seven years since Mark Bloomfield and I traveled to Motihari Evening School in Bihar State, India. There, I saw first hand the real need for free education for the poor, and the ability of education to drastically change the lives of those who were lucky enough to get it. I also saw the benefits of the knowledge spread from the student back to their poor families. Seven years on, and with over 3,000 students leaning at 45 FreeSchool World Literacy funded centres in India and Thailand, I am seeing the real benefits of this education flow back into the community in which the students live. Thank you to Sister Crescence in India, and Ben Bowler and Jildou Brouwer in Thailand for their continuing selfless work in coordinating the schools in the field. The scholarships program, now in its second year, has grown to 9 students and 6 in Thailand, and we have included reports of their progress in this newsletter. It has also been particularly rewarding for me to observe my own children, Francheska and Leonora, gain a deeper understanding of what it means to help those less fortunate than themselves, through their correspondence with the Indian scholarship students, Sonal and Samridhi, that they are sponsoring.

At the first official meeting of FSWL-Australia on the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007 our first committee was elected and on the 16<sup>th</sup> July FreeSchools World Literacy was incorporated in Victoria for the purpose of becoming a registered charity organization. Congratulations to the new Committee. They are Robert Coenraads (President), Ben Bowler (Vice President), Ian Esmore (Publicity Officer), Delphine Swadling (Secretary), Merindi Swadling (Treasurer), Erica Light, Yvonne Hirt, Donna Cervantes, and Kathleen Swadling (Committee Members)

Dr. Robert Coenraads (President)

#### OBJECTIVE

FreeSchools World Literacy Australia has come into being to break the cycle of ignorance and poverty through free education by providing literacy programs; teacher/employment training; income-producing skills, health education; food and clothing; and researching and documenting changes in the wellbeing of the community.

## HISTORY

The first free evening school was founded in 1999 at a small convent school in Motihari, Bihar, India. Sister Crescence and Mark Bloomfield developed a simple inexpensive model for educating desperately poor children who would otherwise never go to school. The state of Bihar is regarded as backward, corrupt and lawless and a very unfortunate place to be born female. 60% of Bihari girls are malnourished and 62% of girls age 6 to 14 are not attending school. Only 23% of women in Bihar are literate, meaning 25 million women are illiterate.

#### HOW IT WORKS

Existing schools are refilled with impoverished children in the late afternoon during normal closing hours and retired female teachers are hired to teach an "essentials only" syllabus. Priority but not exclusivity is given to girls and there is no proselytizing or religious discrimination. The students agree to teach their siblings what they learn each day. Reading, writing, arithmetic, health protection, crafts, income generating skills and civics are taught for two hours each afternoon in otherwise empty classrooms. A high protein meal and a set of clothes are also provided free of charge. The cost efficiency is startling - a year's education for one child for under \$15.

#### WHY SUPPORT LITERACY?

The United Nations' Decade of Literacy – Education for All campaign aims to provide the opportunity for every child to learn to read and write. Education will help reduce violence, terror, inequity and disease. In developing nations, ignorance, poverty and despair trap families in desperate circumstances and work a particular hardship on women and children. Literacy can help alleviate the acute and widespread suffering of innocent people as well as under gird international cooperation and global security.

#### REPLICATING THE MODEL

The free school model is successful and simple to replicate. Since Asia is home to half the human race with 30% illiteracy, FreeSchools World Literacy will fund the expansion of schools in Thailand, India and other parts of Asia over the next 20 years.

#### WHY PRIORITIZE GIRLS' EDUCATION?

As future mothers and teachers, girls are given priority because there are fewer opportunities for them. They face numerous barriers such as deeply-rooted cultural and religious norms, poverty, discrimination, safety, and AIDS. A lack of teachers, text books and separate bathroom facilities often prevent girls from attending school. Even the most modest fees, uniforms and transportation are beyond the reach of impoverished families. Girls often skip childhood, burdened by enforced labour and sibling care and marry as young as age 10. India is second only to China in population and has the most child labour in the world. Three times as many girls as boys die, often from malnutrition or murder. Many are sold into prostitution or bonded labour to ease the family's economic hardship.

International economists agree that the single best investment to improve the wellbeing and economic prospects of developing nations is girl's education. Female literacy is linked to delayed marriage, fewer and healthier children, improved economic prospects, better parenting and more democratic civic participation.

#### FREESCHOOLS WORLD LITERACY TODAY

What began in 1999, at a small convent school of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Bihar, India, has grown to over three thousand students in 45 schools; 29 in rural Bihar, India's poorest state, and 16 schools throughout the isolated tribal villages and refugee settlements of Thailand. These schools provide employment to dozens of female teachers.

## WHAT IT COSTS

The program is not only a great success but very cost-effective since there are no building costs. By refilling existing schools during normal closing hours and hiring trained female teachers in need of income themselves, an "essentials only" syllabus is taught to children, otherwise too poor to attend school. An annual \$15 scholarship provides a year's education for one child. A \$1500 scholarship finances an entire school for one year.

#### OUTREACH

FreeSchools will increase public awareness of scholarships through its website www.freeschools.org and by liaising with organizations that foster literacy such as book clubs, literacy centers, libraries, schools, book stores and those concerned with international cooperation and human rights such as international service organizations, community, cultural and religious groups.

## THE FUTURE

By providing ongoing funds and scholarships for the existing and planned new schools FreeSchools World Literacy Australia will join an International movement to help break the cycle of ignorance and poverty that leaves millions in hopeless despair. FreeSchools hopes to replicate the model hundreds of times throughout India, Thailand and other Asian countries.

#### FREESCHOOL WORLD LITERACY STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

FreeSchool World Literacy has developed a scholarship program to help talented children, particularly girls, who are otherwise too poor to attend regular school during the day. These students are usually already attending a free evening school where the teachers have noted that they are showing above-average ability. The cost to send these children to a regular school is just \$6 per month or \$72 per year.

Your contribution will help such students to:

- complete their school education
- obtain a career far more fitting to their ability
- better support their poor family
- take a place in their local community and complete the cycle

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Exactly what is my donation used for?

Your \$72 donation is used to pay for the student's annual school fees and to purchase a uniform/ books etc. Even this \$12 per month, nothing to us in the first world, is beyond the scope of these needy families.

### Can we choose the student?

Talented students suitable for scholarship are chosen by the teachers and coordinators running our FreeSchool classes in India and Thailand. Such students would be the most capable and enthusiastic in their class, and show exceptional promise. Given the chance, they would be the ones most likely to become leaders in their chosen career and the most likely to in turn contribute back to their local community. Depending on numbers, you may be able to choose a boy or a girl and possibly their age. Currently the program has been set up in India only.

#### Can we write directly to the student?

You can write to your student. The teacher or supervisor in charge of the project will hand on your letters to the student's family, and usually help with any translation where needed. Each year, news about individual students and their progress in school will be published in our FreeSchools World Literacy newsletter.

#### How is the privacy of the students protected?

Personal addresses of the students or their family are not provided to protect their privacy.

### What about administration costs?

All of your \$72 goes directly to pay for the student's. Our workers are all volunteers and so there are no administration costs.

## The Students – India

#### Ashish Kumar Majhi (boy age 17)

Ashish is a poor but very intelligent boy, and has always secured first place in all of his classes. His father is a cook in one of the convents. Ashish began at the Motihari Evening School and from there was recommended to the formal school, St Mary's Motihari. Since Ashish has 4 sisters and one brother, his father, Nagender Majhi, has not been able to help him as he only earns Rs. 1800 per month. He is now preparing to appear for 12<sup>th</sup> year exams. His future plan is to be laboratory technician and support his parents through his earnings.

### Prasant D'cruze (boy age 16)

Prasant is a student of St Mary's Motihari. His father, Anil, is a man of small means who finds it very difficult to meet the yearly expenses of Prasant's education. Prasant has turned out to be a champion in school athletics, especially in running, long jump and cricket.

#### Sonal (girl, age 15) and Samridhi (girl age 13)

Sonal and Samridhi are sisters and very good in studies. Over and above they are toppers in extra curricular activities of the school, such as dance, drama competitions and elocution. Their father, Vincent Paul helps the Sisters while their mother, Usha, earns some income as a teacher in a private Middle School in Bettiah. Her salary is R 2000 per month. The parents find it very difficult to provide for the education of their 3 daughters.

#### Pratima Das (girl)

Pratima's mother, Champa Devi, began selling vegetables in the evenings on the road side, after Pratima's father, Ramjit Das, died 8 years ago with cerebral malaria. Pratima has 2 sisters and one brother, They live on the earnings from the roadside sales. All that the mother has is Rs 300/. The family lives in the open and have a diet of rice and salt. There only clothes are the set they are wearing. When evening school started at Motihari, Pratima was called to evening school, where her talent's and intellectual capacities developed. Pratima seems to be an all rounder, has became the leader of her class. Her performance on stage is admirable, seen by the visitors from abroad. She has studied up to class 6 at evening school, and is a genuine candidate for scholarship to the day school.

#### Jyoti Manjhi (boy, age 17)

Jyoti comes from a poor family; the family does not have their own house. Father Nursing Manjhi works in mission, as a gardener, Due to lack of proper food Jyoti became TB patient. Our sisters felt pity on her and brought her to the Convent at the age of 9 years. She was given medication and proper food by the sisters. She improved and was so obliged to the sisters that she decided to live with sisters and serve them. She

studied up to class 5 in N.F.P. education and then began 10th in our school. Now she is in year 10. Her parents cannot afford for her studies.

#### Rufus (boy, age 8) and Mihir (boy, age 6)

Rufus and Mihir, come from a broken home. Unfortunately, at the early stage, the marriage of their parents, Mala and Rajesh, became a failure. The father was a heavy drinker, and did not care or look after wife and children, so Mala returned to her parents with the two boys. Mala is teaching in a small private school, She gets Rs 600/- along with food per month, with these Rs 600/-. She has to maintain herself and the two sons. Rufus and Mihir stay at their grandparents place at Bettiah and study at the Mission School Bettiah. As Sister Crescence entered his house one day, she heard him shout, "I have passed in all subjects."

#### Sapana Kumari (girl)

Introductory information-Sapana's real parents can not be traced; One fine morning at 4 O'clock the traffic police heard the cry of a little child. Curious, he followed the direction from where the sound was coming and finally reached a heap of garbage. There he saw a tiny baby, 3 to 4 days of age, lying on garbage, wrapped in rags, Her leg was being eaten by ants. The child was sent to Mother Teresa's orphanage. She was well taken care of by the sisters for 4 months. One-day, a couple came to the orphanage for a visit. After hear the sad history of Sapana, moved as they were, they decided to take the child and bring her up, Luckily the couple had no child of their own, so they became the parents of Sapana. Sapana is now in her first year at St Michael's English Medium School, Bettiah, where her aggregate marks are above 80% or 90%. Sapana is smart talkative, sharp, very intelligent, and very good in caricature

## The Students - Thailand

#### Darrin Sompet (girl, age 12)

Darrin has no parents anymore. Her father left before she was born and her mother left for Bangkok to work as a prostitute. She was taken in by a lady in the village with whom she has lived with ever since she was a baby. Napa, her new mother, also had the care of a boy with no parents left. His name is Nougen, now 25, married with Nassii, 15, and they have a 2 year old. Nassii was 12 years old when she married and she never had any education.

Darrin is 12 years old and started in grade 1 with the 6 year olds. She has now already graduated to grade 2. Darrin is lucky that she always went to Free School for the last 2 years so she learned so much already. She knows the Thai alphabet, can speak, write and read quite well. Her health is not good but she is a fighter; she has TBC and will be on strong medication for the next 6 months. We took her to the hospital last month for treatment. Darrin was already ill last year and went to the hospital but wasn't able to pay the medical bill. So she could not go back to follow up on her TBC treatment because she was too scared. Because she was abandoned she has no papers and no ID card. We are all very proud of her.

#### Nanga Jala (girl, age 12)

Because there are too many children in her family, Nanga's parents couldn't afford to send her to school. She is going very well and is able to follow the lessons well.

#### Naying Jaaie (girl, age 10)

Naying's father was a Thai soldier who never stayed with her and her mother. When Naying was very young her mother left her with her grandma and to start a new family. Her mother has never seen her since. Her grandmother is too old to work and cannot pay for the school fees. Naying is bright and happy to be at school.

#### Darika Suriya (girl, age 8)

Darika has only her mother left. Again her father was a Thai soldier who doesn't even know of her existence. She looks like she has been at that school for a long time; she just fitted in right away and made new friends.

#### Channon Krongkrawpana (boy, age 8)

Channon's family is too poor to support him. He has been struggling a bit with the Thai language but is now showing some improvement and good social skills by making contact with the other kids.

#### Tatphon Jaopongpai (boy, age 8)

Tatphon's family is too poor to support him. His father is not functioning well. Tatphon is struggling with the lessons as well with the social interactions with his classmates. He is not talking to other children and is not responding to any question of his teacher. We suspect that he experiences a severe culture shock and has a much poorer understanding of Thai than the other 5 children. In the village he is gregarious, but at school he experiences the opposite, which off course must be quite stressful. We are very happy that his mother actually came to school to talk to the teacher. She hardly speaks Thai and cannot help him with his learning but the fact that she is supportive is great to know. Tatphon will start this week (August) at the kindergarten to get extra help with the alphabet and to gain confidence with speaking. While the younger children will have a nap after lunch, he will get one on one remedial teaching. We are following him closely in his learning but even more important in his emotional development so we can make decisions such as placing him in kindergarten for more care. We do trust that he will settle in slowly and will start to make some friends.

## YES I WOULD LIKE TO SPONSOR A FREESCHOOLS STUDENT

Please find enclosed my gift of:

\$(your choice)	to support the operations of the freeschools
\$ 16	to support a child to attend a FreeSchool in India
\$ 72	to provide a scholarship for one student to attend regular school for a year
\$ 100-150	to support a child to attend a Government School in Thailand

My cheque is enclosed and crossed "Not Negotiable" and made payable to FreeSchools World Literacy

Or Please debit my Bankcard Mastercard Visa Account Number \_\_\_\_ Expiry Date \_\_/\_\_ Repeat Donation Annually yes/no Signature

Contact Details Name Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr Name of supporting organization (if applicable) Address Postcode

Please complete your details and send your donation to:

Incorporation No. A0050403 N

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