

# Friends of Vellore

## NSW Branch

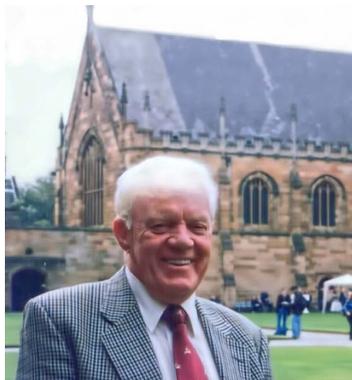
Supporting the work at

*Christian Medical College & Hospital, S.India*

**January 2011**

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### **Dr. Reg Walker**



**13. Dec 1922 - 31 Oct 2010**

The NSW Friends of Vellore have lost a mentor and a dear friend with the passing away of Reg Walker. He has been an integral part of the Friends of Vellore, NSW for years. He was one of the founders of the Sydney Friends of Vellore which later became the Australian Vellore Board. He has been the chairman both at the state and national levels for many years. Beth and Reg regularly attended all our gatherings, even in the latter days, despite their failing health.

He has been a pillar of strength and a counsellor to many of us who have been associated with him in the activities of the FOV and we will miss him very much.

*I have reproduced a tribute written by Malcolm Brown published in Sydney Morning herald on 6th Nov, 2010.*

For many years, the chimes of the University of Sydney's carillon echoed across the lawns of the university, sweeping down to Victoria Park, which, towards the end of Reg Walker's life, as he played the instrument, became more beautiful.

Reg Walker, a physician, heart specialist, pianist, organist, carillon-player, choir leader and a long-term councillor of the university's Wesley College, represented some of the highest civilising values of Australia's first university. Coming from a strong Methodist family, Walker had been multitalented from his earliest years and throughout his schooling at Sydney Boys High. At the age of 16, by virtue of his prowess with the piano, he had become an associate of the London College of Music. With his formidable intellect, he combined music, medical practice and ecumenicalism throughout his life in a way that left a lasting impact.

Reginald Lavis Walker was born in Grafton on December 13, 1922, second son of a Methodist minister, Alfred Walker, and Violet (nee Lavis). The young Walker enrolled at the University of Sydney to study medicine and learnt to play the organ and carillon. He sang with the Sydney University Musical Society and was organist and choirmaster at the Hunter Baillie Memorial Presbyterian Church, Annandale. In 1942, he was appointed the university's honorary assistant carillonist. Through his association with the master of Wesley College, the Reverend Bertram Wyllie, he established links with the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, southern India.

Walker finished his course in 1943, at the age of 21, the course having been compressed because of the war, and he took up the Busby Music Scholarship for performance on carillon and organ. He set up as a general practitioner in a garage at Herne Bay, which was then very much on the southern outskirts of Sydney. Some of his house calls involved taking a boat trip across the Georges River, sometimes at night. He looked young for his age, so much so that one day a passer-by called over the fence: "Sonny, is the doctor in?"

In 1947, Walker married Margaret Garrett, whom he had met through the University of Sydney's Student Christian Movement (SCM). They had a daughter, Robyn. Sadly, after two years of marriage, Margaret died. In 1951, Walker married another SCM associate, Elizabeth Davison, starting a union that was to last almost 59 years.

In 1952, Walker continued study in Britain and became a member of the Royal College of Physicians. A daughter, Frances, was born. The family returned to Australia and settled in Hurstville. Walker then opened rooms in Macquarie Street, Sydney, and became an honorary physician at Canterbury, Sydney and Rachel Forster hospitals. He was member of the Postgraduate Committee in Medicine at the University of Sydney for six years, a member of the faculty of medicine at the University of NSW for 11 years and clinical teacher for 15 years and a clinical teacher at Canterbury Hospital. Walker was a

founding member of the Australian Diabetes Society and a member of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes.

Two more children, Stephen and Helen, were born and in 1958 the family moved to Killara, where son Peter was born. At the Gordon Methodist Church, Walker conducted the youth choir, which became an important part of his life. His repertoire included Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Bach cantatas and a Jazz Mass, a mixture that brought flocks of young people to the church. He became a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He also joined the council of Sydney's Ravenswood School for Girls, where he was to serve for nearly 20 years, and was active in the Methodist and Uniting churches. In 1974, he took 12 months' leave to work at the medical college and hospital at Vellore, in southern India.

For the first nine years of existence of the Uniting Church - from 1977 until 1986 - Walker was chairman of its National Commission for World Mission. He worked with the General Conference of Christian Churches of Asia, the Christian Medical College and Hospital at Vellore, India, and local congregations in Sydney. John Brown, a former director of the commission, said: "He was not a minister but he ministered to many people."

In 1977, Walker resumed playing the university's carillon in an honorary capacity. He was a founding member of the Carillon Society of Australia and its president for 10 years, giving recitals in Canberra, Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Spain, Holland, Canada and the US. Walker was guest recitalist at the International Carillon Festival in the President Palace in Barcelona in 1994. In 2000, he retired from medical practice. The Wesley College Council, which he had served for 47 years as councillor, trustee and chairman, made him the college's first fellow. Reg Walker died on October 31. He is survived by Elizabeth, his five children and 15 grandchildren.

#### **Donations to Friends of Vellore in memory of Reg Walker**

At the memorial service, the Walker family requested the friends and relatives to send donations to the FOV in his memory and so far we have received \$7550.00. We wish to thank all the donors on behalf of Beth Walker and the FOV for your kind contribution.

#### **Dinner for Dr. Isaac Jebaraj**

Dr. Jebaraj and his wife (Dr.) Prasanna were in Sydney as part of their travel around the country visiting various state groups of friends of Vellore. We had a dinner at Burwood St, John of God Hospital Dining room on August 8<sup>th</sup> to meet them. Isaac gave a talk on the recent developments at Vellore (same topics he elaborated at the AGM) It was a pleasure to meet them and to make

acquaintance. Dr, Jebaraj is a professor of orthopaedic surgery and associate Director of CMC and Prasanna is a professor of Psychiatry at CMC.

### **The AGM of the Australian Vellore Board. Melbourne Aug 14th, 2010**

This year's Meeting of the Australian Board of CMC was held in Queen's College, University of Melbourne, significant in its association with Dr Ted Gault, who spent 25 yrs of his life in Vellore. His daughter, Louise Joy, current secretary of the Victorian FOV, had done an excellent job with the organisation of the meeting and the dinner which followed that night and both events turned out to be warm and congenial, in contrast to the cold Melbourne weather!!

In addition to the Executive of the Board, namely, Ian Olver, President, Bella George, Vice President, Richard Caitens, Treasurer, John Rothwell, Secretary, Stephen Aseervatham, Publicity officer, the existing State groups were all represented. There was even a representative from WA, where FOV is at present is only at the seedling stage!! Dayalan Devanesen, who was to have represented the Alumni, was sadly in India at his brother's funeral, but several Alumni were present at the meeting in various capacities.

Dr Isaac Jebaraj, Associate Director of CMC, was the Chief Guest. His talk emphasised 3 areas of interest;

1. Chittoor campus, 660 acres of land, which had already been walled— a length of 10kms at a cost of 2 crores. The projected timeline for development of this campus was quite amazing—a kerbside eye clinic in 3/12, a prefabricated OP clinic in 36/ 12, a 200 bed hosp in 3 yrs, 400 beds in 5 yrs and a medical college in 10yrs! It was anticipated that this campus would be the ideal setting to develop a research centre in, as the lack of space in CMCH was responsible for this aspect of the Institution lagging behind.

2. Mission Hospitals—these were at present struggling to stay viable. There are 250 hospitals from 40 missions associated with CMCH. In an attempt to foster interest in these hospitals, students from CMC spend 2/52 there in their 3rd and 4th years. This topic generated much discussion especially from the alumni present as many had spent time in these hospitals following graduation.

3. Non recognition of courses. At present there were 40 courses that CMCH had the capacity to run, but had not received approval from the Medical Council of India. One way to overcome this was for CMC to be recognised as an Institute of National Importance (INI) like All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the IITs (Indian Institute of Technology). This gave them the privilege of running their

own courses etc. However CMC is a Minority Institution which gives it certain rights, and if there was a possibility of losing these with becoming an INI, then the latter would have to be forgone. Dr Isaac's overview brought us up to date with happenings at Vellore and it was a privilege to have him in our midst.

Dr Ian Olver, President of the Australian Board, drew parallels between the changes taking place in Vellore and those taking place in the Australian FOV. Whereas once the FOV was heavily supported by the churches, now most of the support came from the medical community. He felt that one way of ensuring that this continued was to harness the interest of the returning elective students and keep them linked to the State bodies. Dr Olver also expressed a keen desire to see a FOV start in Western Australia and initiatives had already been taken in this direction. His meeting with Dr Renu John, a CMC alumnus, in Perth, had resulted in there being a representative from WA at this meeting and it is hoped that his efforts will soon bear fruit. It was also noted that there were several CMC supporters in NT and a FOV there was also a possibility. Dr Olver emphasised strengthening ties between FOV and the CMC Alumni.

The state reports indicated that the local groups continued to be active, some more than others, and each had met or exceeded their budgeted contributions. The publicity officer, Dr Stephen Aseervatham, continued to do a great job maintaining the FOV webpage. He was also involved in networking with the State FOV groups and the CMC Alumni and even hoped to establish a link with the NZ FOV.

The Alumni report recognised the honour given to Dr Nitin Verma, batch of 1974, who was appointed Member of the Order of Australia in the June 2010 Queen's birthday honours list for services rendered to Ophthalmology and humanitarian health care projects in the Pacific region. It also emphasised the work that many Australian Alumni were doing in developing countries and so carrying on the vision of Dr Ida Scudder in ministering to those in need. The date for the 6th Alumni get together was Oct 1st to 3rd in Adelaide.

Of added interest was a view on CMC through Rev John Connan's eyes. He had the opportunity to make a private visit to CMC and to attend the Vellore Council 2010 Ordinary General Meeting. He noted that the free work done by CMC was 13.9% of their total expenditure, while education subsidy for students was 7.4%. He was pleased to note that Australia's contribution was 30.4% of funds received from FOV groups worldwide! He also had the opportunity to visit individual departments and was impressed with the work being done in the Stem cell research centre, CHAD, The Rehabilitation Centre, (which has links with the Social Work Dept of the Univ of Melbourne), the Low Cost Effective Care Unit, and RUHSA. He also had the opportunity to visit the radiotherapy unit (where

brachytherapy is being carried out), the new College of Nursing, and the Bioengineering Dept which encourages students to develop medical equipment that is cheap, but effective. He also advised the Board that Dr Reena George, Palliative Care Physician from Vellore, had been awarded a scholarship from the Ted Gault Memorial Trust to spend a month in Australia to undertake some study. The meeting appreciated the detailed report from Rev John Connan.

Before the meeting ended, the Executive of the Board was elected unchanged for the next 12 months and under the capable leadership of Dr Ian Olver , the organisation should go from strength to strength.

*Report by Dr. Bella George, Vice President of the Board*

### **Financial Report for the Year 2009 -10**

The Treasurer of the Board, Richard Caitens in his report presented the income / expenditure for the year. A total of \$113,956.00 was received from various states. NSW contributed \$12025.00. Thank you all for your kind donations. \$140,000.00 was sent to Vellore. Part of this was used for the development of the Yelagiri Retreat centre for the staff and students. This centre was originally purchased by contribution from Australian FOV.

### **Australian Vellore Alumni gathering - October 2011 - Sydney**

The alumni gathering in Adelaide in October 2010 was a great success. Alumni from various parts of Australia as well as from New Zealand, Malaysia, USA and UK also attended. One special feature was the participation of the local FOV at the gala dinner. The next gathering is planned for October 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> in Sydney. Drs.Vineet and Roshini Nair are the organisers. We are hoping that many of our friends of Vellore in NSW also would be able to attend some of the activities.

### **Best wishes for the New Year**

The executive of the NSW Friends of Vellore wish you all a happy and healthy New Year. We have not been able to organise a gathering for some time. Hopefully we will get around to doing it in the New Year. We are looking for volunteers to serve in the executive. We desperately need some new blood.

**Our Web Site – [www.australianfov.net.au](http://www.australianfov.net.au)**

Please visit our web site to get all the news about Vellore and latest news of the various branches of FOV in Australia