



VELLORE NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF VELLORE CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL (QLD)

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(Qld FOV is a branch of the Australian Board of the Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital)

Dear Friends,

This year it is Brisbane's turn to host the annual meeting of the Australian Board **on 27 August**. It is expected that the Director, Dr Suranjan Bhattacharji and his wife, Dr Sara Bhattacharji, will visit Friends groups in Australia and will attend this Board meeting. We will plan an opportunity to allow many Qld Friends the opportunity to meet them and hear directly up-to-date news from the Christian Medical College. Dr Sara has been the head of the Low Cost Effective Care Unit which provides medical care for poor people in Vellore, many of whom live in slums.

Details will be given in the next Newsletter.

Kindly note the date of the 2011 Vellore Dinner Saturday 28 May

This popular dinner will again be held in the Emmanuel Uniting Church Hall, 249 South Pine Road, Enoggera.

The speaker will be: **Dr Joseph Thomas**, Vellore Graduate and Brisbane Specialist (see p.2 for more about Dr Thomas).

The planned program includes Indian entertainment and a quality Indian buffet meal. Tickets (adults \$40, concession \$30) are available from Ian Kerr 3372 5970 or Brian Lee 3351 3272. An application form is included in this Newsletter for addresses in or near Brisbane. Do get your ticket early to avoid disappointment.

ANNUAL INDIAN DINNER 2011 GUEST SPEAKER

Dr Joseph Thomas began at CMC Vellore in 1979 and completed post-graduate studies in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in 1992. After working in the Bangalore Baptist Hospital, and the Asha Kiran Hospital in Orissa, he came to work in Maternal Fetal Medicine in Adelaide in 2003 and is currently a Staff Specialist in this at Brisbane's Mater Hospital. Dr Thomas' wife, Grace, is a teacher. They have two University student sons and a daughter in school.

NEW CHAIRMAN FOR QLD FRIENDS' COMMITTEE



After chairing the Qld Friends of Vellore since 2003, Dr Bella George retired from this position at the October Annual Meeting. She was thanked for her gracious, wise and energetic leadership over these 8 years. Dr Bella continues as the Vice-President of the Australian Board.

Mrs Cathy Chandani, who spent some years at CMC Vellore as an Occupational Therapist, was elected to the chair. Dr Bella George continues as the Vice-President of the Australian Board. Mrs Kerry Griffiths joined the Committee. The other officers and Committee members were re-appointed.

Dinner and other special events.

The Committee meets quarterly and working groups are appointed to plan the Annual

QLD FRIENDS TREASURER'S REPORT

Our Treasurer, Richard Caitens, reported that in the year ending 30 June 2010 the sum of \$60,000 was paid to the Australian Board for forwarding to Vellore. Income from the year included tax deductible donations \$38,359.81, Person to Person donation \$1,500, Investment interest \$1,809.82, Indian dinner profit (2 in this financial year) \$8,831.40 and Street Stalls and other sales \$17,260.65. These proceeds from Street Stalls and the Indian dinners come because of the consistent hard work of many volunteers whose dedication to the support of CMC Vellore is greatly appreciated. Apart from the obvious costs associated with running the dinners, administration expenses for the year were just 3.1% of the money raised.

QLD FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

We were privileged to have as the speaker at the Annual Meeting in Oct, Dr Reena George who spoke of the beginnings of the Palliative Care unit at CMC, its progress to the present time and of the importance of this level of care in the Indian context. She told moving stories of some of those who had received palliative care, people from poor communities rendered totally penniless because of a terminal illness. One woman, when told she could leave her totally inadequate quarters and move to a respite facility that had been found for her, asked if she could take her "things". Her "things" turned out to be a spare sari, a plate and a spoon – she had nothing more than that.



Dr Bella George and Dr Reena George

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AT VELLORE

During a visit to India in October, Rev Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, followed in the footsteps of a number of previous holders of that office and visited CMC Vellore. Such visits are seen to signify a long and continuing relationship between CMC and the world wide church. CMC Newsline 's report of this visit included: "He is internationally acknowledged as an outstanding theologian, distinguished scholar and writer and an accomplished poet and translator. More importantly he has been an articulate voice on contemporary cultural, political, social and interfaith issues." As he concluded his visit he commended CMC's role as an institution that represents a holistic vision and is thus a witness of Christian ministry in the context of health and healing.

The British Deputy High Commissioner, Mr Mike Nithavrianakis, also visited Vellore. He said that he was looking to facilitate ways in which CMC can work in collaboration with British universities, hospitals and companies.

DEATH OF AN AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS OF VELLORE FOUNDER



As a young Sydney University medical student, Reg Walker was one of those who met in 1943 with Dr Ted Gault and invited guests where the decision was made to begin a support group in Australia for the Christian Medical College, Vellore. Earlier Dr Gault, an Australian doctor with experience in Azamgarh, North India, had been called to CMC to set up a Pathology Department.

After Dr Reg Walker's death on 31 October there were many tributes to this extraordinary man who was a physician, heart specialist, pianist, organist, carillon player, choir leader and much more. For many years he ably chaired the Australian Vellore Board, a position which led him to take a year's leave in 1974 to work at CMC during Dr L B M Joseph's time as Director. He took the position of sabbatical replacement for Dr Benji Pulimood as head of a medical department. This was the time of a difficult, protracted and at times dangerous industrial dispute involving workers at CMC which was not an easy time to be head of a department.

Those of us who knew Dr Walker personally and worked with him in one or more of the many roles he filled so capably are greatly saddened by his death but at the same time we are grateful for all his many gifts which he used so unsparingly in the service of others.

A Service of Thanksgiving for Dr Walker's life, led by Revs David Gill and Ruth Thomas, was held in the Great Hall, The University of Sydney in November.

AUSTRALIAN BOARD'S PRESIDENT HONOURED

Among those honoured as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM) is Professor Ian Olver for service to medical oncology and to the community through leadership roles with cancer control organisations. Both before and after becoming President of the Australian Board of CMC he visited Vellore. He was also the speaker at one of our dinners in Brisbane. Dr Olver is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Cancer Council Australia.

AUSTRALIAN BOARD TREASURER'S VISIT TO VELLORE

(contributed by Richard Caitens)

In January I was fortunate to be able to visit CMC Vellore for 12 days. The main purpose of my visit was to attend the biannual Council meeting but I was also able to visit many of the departments and programs at Vellore.

India was a wonderful, yet heart wrenching place to visit. The people were happy despite their apparent poverty – perhaps from my definition of poverty not theirs. The first thing that struck me was the noise and masses of people. Honking my car horn here in Brisbane in the same manner as in India would extract an entirely different response from the other drivers. It was to let the other drivers know where you were, rarely in anger. Helmetless motorcyclists were the norm along with women in beautiful sarees holding their infant children riding side-saddle behind their husbands.

A visit to the new Campus at Chittoor, just 25km from Vellore, showed building works underway on the outpatient department that is expected to be in operation from April 2011. Following this, work will begin on a 100 bed secondary hospital due for completion in August 2011. Work is also continuing on the boundary fence around both blocks. The fence is an important factor that was recommended by a judge – the squatters on the land had to be relocated and compensated and, without a fence, the next group of poor people will move in. None of the squatters was disrespectfully removed.



At RUHSA I visited an elderly group supported by Friends of Vellore UK. In the villages, the elderly are considered a burden as they no longer earn an income and are largely abandoned. FoV UK provide a midday meal 5 days a week for 102 elderly villagers at a cost of Rs25 per meal. To celebrate his son's birthday, the local hotel owner provided the meal on the day I visited.

A STORY FROM THE LOW COST WARD

Against her parent's wishes, Rajamma, from Andhra Pradesh, married Selvam and went to live with his parents in the neighbouring State, Tamil Nadu. She soon found he had an alcohol problem. Two children were born and when the boy became a teenager, Rajamma sent him to live with her mother to protect him from his father. Her husband's own parents were getting old and frail and could not help.

Rajamma developed a swelling in her lower abdomen and the pain became so great she knew she needed to see a doctor. She had had little schooling so earned what she could cooking in one house and looking after children in another, earning about *Rs1000 a month. CMC's Low Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) has Community Based Rehabilitation volunteers in many parts of Vellore and Rajamma sought their help. They advised her to go to the LCECU where the cost is minimal. The doctor there realised she might need surgery and referred her to one of the main Hospital's surgical units. Here surgery for a hernia and 9 days in the hospital led to a bill for Rs18,270, much more than she could ever afford. By borrowing from her family she managed to pay Rs3010. CMC's Person to Person Fund, supported by well wishers around the world, paid Rs4000 and the balance was absorbed by the Hospital's own contingency funds.

Rajamma, truly grateful for the love, care and generosity of so many who showed her the love of God in her hour of need, is one of many being helped in this way.

* Currently there are about Rs40 to an Australian dollar.

ADVANCED COURSE IN VACCINOLOGY

In an Australian Vellore Board leaflet of the early 1980s there was a statement, correct at the time, that 500 Indian children a day suffered a polio infection. In 2010 there were only 42 known cases in the whole of India. Such progress has depended on massive annual vaccinations. In India in 2010, 2.5 million Government workers and members of foreign NGOs vaccinated 172 million children.

In September 2010 the first 10 day Advanced Course in Vaccinology in India was organised by CMC Vellore in collaboration with a number of Indian Government departments and the Research Council of Norway. The aim was to provide a comprehensive overview of the science of Vaccinology, to close gaps in knowledge and provide a pool of trained people for assessing evidence, making policy for delivering vaccines and other preventive interventions. The Norway Research Council felt that such a course would benefit not just India but the entire South Asian region. The 50 participants included infectious disease specialists, paediatricians, public health specialists, immunisation program officers and public health officials from India, Norway, Denmark and Nepal.

OUTREACH TO TRIBAL PEOPLE

The big buildings in the Hospital Campus in Vellore – now officially a city – are only a part of the CMC story. Community work also is extensive and varied.



It was an initiative of Dr C K Job, a charismatic and eminent alumnus and staff member of CMC, who saw great need in the tribal villages in the 1000m high Jawadhi Hills, south west of Vellore. At first the English speaking congregation in Vellore, then later the Community Health Department (CHAD) took an interest.

In the early 80s leprosy was a CHAD priority so when funds were available leprosy control and general health services were developed in an area with a population of 18-20,000. These funds ended so leprosy work had to stop. CHAD was able to maintain a monthly clinic from its own funds and never forgot these remote, neglected and impoverished communities.

In 2006 the Danish Mission, a supporter of CHAD for some years, became interested in supporting outreach work in these tribal communities. Two years later the plans were complete, funding was provided and it became possible to take up more general community health work. CHAD staff work in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Government Health System Project. Daily visits to the Jawadhi Hills using mobile clinics, socio-economic programs, inter-action with self-help groups of farmers, young women and children and vocational training have reached 160 villages with a population of about 30,000.

Those who live in the Jawadhi Hills remain very needy people, but now a concerted effort by CMC is being made to improve their well being and quality of life.

The CMC DVD “Home of a Healing God” (A day in the life of the Christian Medical College and Hospital) is still available for \$10 including postage.

Order from: Brian Lee, 19 Glencloy St Ferny Grove Q 4055 (jblee19@bigpond.net.au). These DVDs will be available at the Indian Dinner.

WEB SITES

www.australianfov.net.au

Vellore and USA sites: www.cmch-vellore.edu & www.vellorecmc.org

STREET STALL NEWS

Many thanks to new volunteers, and to those wonderful people who continue their many years of stall work. In recent months more than \$1000 a month has come just from these two stalls.

Each of the Toowong and Tank Street stalls happen once a month. New helpers are always welcome. Continuing needs include:

- Suitable items for sale
- Help with transporting the goods
- Workers at the stalls
 - regularly or now and again as you are able.

If you, or someone you know, can help in this, kindly contact Mrs Claire Mainstone (3371 1332).

Special thanks to Mrs Dot Costin who worked on, and then led, the City street stall (now in Tank St) for more than 40 years until December last year. This dedicated service will be long remembered.

For much of the material in these Newsletters I am indebted to CMC's weekly "Newslink" and to Mrs Ann Witchalls' great stories about people whose lives are changed by the care they receive through CMC Vellore.

Regards, Brian
(Newsletter Editor).

QLD FRIENDS OF VELLORE OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman: Mrs Cathy Chandani, 24 Mathews St, Bethania 4205 (ph 0412391353)

Vice Chairman: Rev John Hooper, 74 Meynell St, Salisbury 4107 (ph 3701 0017)

Hon. Secretary: Mrs Gwenda Spencer, 22 Elgata St, The Gap 4061 (ph 3300 1542)

Hon. Treasurer: Mr Richard Caitens, 107 Northgate Rd, Northgate 4013
(ph 3266 1962)

Stalls Co-ordinator: Mrs Claire Mainstone, 37 Fifth Av, St Lucia, 4067 (ph 3371 1332)

Publicity Officer &

Newsletter Editor: Rev Brian Lee, 19 Glencloy Street, Ferny Grove 4055 (ph 3351 3272)