

Friends of Vellore, Victoria

A division of the Australian Board of Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital Limited, ABN 18 110 916 375

JANUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

Since the last newsletter we have had two functions, a fundraising dinner in August, and the annual general meeting in October 2015.

VELLORE DINNER 22 AUGUST 2015

Report by Mrs Louise Joy

Queen's College Junior Common Room was packed with eighty six guests for the annual Vellore fund raising dinner on Saturday 22 August 2015. There's no doubt that Evelyn Lehmann, FOVV Events Coordinator gave an extra polish to the evening, acknowledged by Professor David Runia, Friends of Vellore Victoria President and Master of Queen's College. Evelyn and FOVV Treasurer, Mrs. Heidi Winnen, kept the evening lively with the auction of saris from Jan Harper and a raffle box on every table. Evelyn had coordinated the menu and seating arrangements with Ms. Athina Gotzamanis, Queen's College Conference Coordinator. The hall looked splendid with floral decorations on each table.

We were fortunate that CMC Vellore Director Professor Sunil Chandy was at the Dinner with his wife Dr. Gigi Chandy. Sunil, who had recently shown Professor David Runia around Vellore, maintaining the close links with Queen's College, gave an illustrated up date of doings at CMC.

The Guest Speaker was Clinical Associate Professor Nitin Verma AM, immediate past president CMC Vellore Alumni in Australia. Nitin has an Australian honour for his work on the ophthalmic problems of Australian aborigines and an honour from East Timor for which country he is honorary consul in Tasmania where he continues his ophthalmic work. From this extensive experience, Nitin gave a stimulating talk on international education.

Professor Lynette Joubert, Department of Social Work University of Melbourne Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, showed the video taken by the husband of a social work student on placement at CMC.

There was a buzz of conversation as friends and family of Friends of Vellore enjoyed the evening. There were cousins from South Australia sitting with the South Australian Vellore Board delegate, long standing guests and those new to the occasion looking forward to the 2016 Dinner.

Numbers were swelled by Australian Vellore Board members and State delegates who had been at the AGM during the day.

[Dr. Bella George, President \(QLD\)](#)

[Mrs. Liz Guiver, Secretary \(Vic \)](#)

[Dr. Robyn Bradley, N.S.W. Representative & Robin Bradley](#)

[Dr. Anil Roy, S.A. Representative](#)

[Rev'd Colin Honey, VIC. Representative](#)

[Dr. Stephen Aseervatham, Vice-President \(NSW\)](#)

[Rev. Ian Kerr, QLD. Representative & Pam Kerr](#)

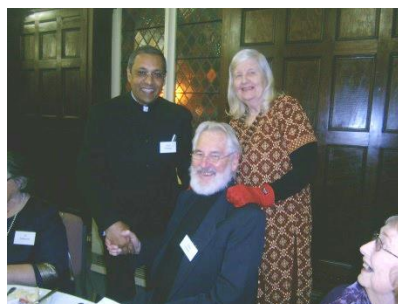
[Dr. Jeanette Hyland, TAS. Representative](#)

[Dr. David Price, VIC. Representative](#)

Financially the Vellore Dinner was a great success. There was even a volunteer for the FOVV Executive 2015 -2016 coming up for election at the FOVV AGM 24 October 2015.



Louise Joy and Evelyn Lehmann at the FOVV 2015 Annual Dinner



Professor Sunil Chandy, Dr John Gault and Mrs Louise Joy (née Gault) at the FOVV 2015 Annual Dinner

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Dr Nitin Verma gave an illustrated address entitled:

“Education in the Twenty First Century – the Global Classroom”

His talk outlined his work as an ophthalmologist in a number of countries. He made the point that education is the long-term answer to making countries self-sufficient in eye care. His initial medical training was at the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India. He wanted to become an ophthalmologist when he was a fourth year medical student and at his Internship, was posted to Karigiri Hospital, which was a leprosy hospital.

While working there, he learnt that leprosy causes blindness. The cornea becomes anaesthetic and slowly gets damaged and becomes opaque. He learnt how to transplant a tendon from a muscle in the temple to the eyelid and get the patient to learn how to close the eyelid by clenching the jaw. This prevented damage to the eye and consequent blindness. Part of the learning process involved attending eye camps in India where cataract operations were done. More than 5,000 patients a day were seen, 200 operated in a theatre where 12 tables ran at the same time.

After his training, he was invited to go to Germany to work on the development of an intraocular lens. In those days these were not used in India which necessitated patients wearing thick spectacles after cataract surgery. Once the lens was developed, he returned to Vellore where some of the first implants in India were carried out. Implantation of intraocular lenses after cataract surgery is now the norm.

In 1994, Nitin went to Papua New Guinea where his brief was to provide eye services in the country as well as to train Papua New Guineans to become ophthalmologists. He set up the Masters and Diploma programs in Ophthalmology based on his experiences in India and Germany. After three armed hold-ups, he moved to the Northern Territory and set up and ran the Aboriginal Eye Program in the Top End of the Northern Territory. There he spent a lot of time training Registrars as well as up-skilling general practitioners and nurses in ophthalmology. It was here that he got the opportunity to start the East Timor Eye Program. The program has now been running for over fifteen years. It was initially involved in service delivery and setting up infrastructure and now also in training East Timorese doctors and nurses to slowly take over the Program and make East Timor self-sufficient in the provision of eye care services.

The Timorese doctors had their basic medical training in Cuba and East Timor. Their ophthalmic training was carried out in East Timor as well as Nepal. Electronic means of communication including telemedicine, was used to link up the National Eye Centre in Dili with various institutions in Australia and other part of the world. Specialists from Australia, India and Nepal, have come to East Timor to train these doctors who will ultimately get their Degree from the University of Timor Leste. In addition, East Timorese have been trained in the manufacture of spectacles and artificial eyes. The medical personnel have also been involved with research and papers are regularly published from the National Eye Centre.

As a result of his commitment, Nitin was awarded the Order of Australia and the Order of Timor Leste. He is the Honorary Consul for Timor Leste in Tasmania, where he resides when not overseas working.



Mr David Price OAM with Prof. David Runia as Mr Price led the singing of CMC Vellore traditional College Grace of the Doxology



Professor Nitin Verma during his presentation at the Annual Dinner

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2 pm Saturday 24 October 2015 at Stafford Room, Queen's College, The University of Melbourne

President's Report

David Runia

The year that has passed since the previous AGM on 11 October 2014 has been a year of transition. At the AGM Mrs Liz Guiver laid down her role as President and it was proposed that Prof David Runia, Master of Queen's College, would take up the role. This was later confirmed. After the AGM, through the splendid efforts of the recruitment officer Mrs Louise Joy, the existing committee was augmented by new members, resulting in a committee of 12.

The executive met on four occasions, December, March, June and July, each time at Queen's College. The last two meetings were primarily devoted to the organisation of the Annual FOVV dinner held also at Queen's College on 22 August.

That winter's day in August was certainly the highlight of the year for our group of Friends. Firstly we hosted the Annual General Meeting of the Board of the Australian Friends of Vellore, led by its president Dr Bella George. It was most fortunate that the Director of the CMC, Dr Sunil Chandy, was in Melbourne for the meeting, so we heard about the very latest developments at the College and Hospital from the horse's mouth as it were. I wish to thank the members of the committee who made the arrangements for the meeting and especially (in her absence) our secretary Dr Helen McNamara.

Secondly the annual dinner of the Friends of Vellore Victoria was held in the Junior Common Room of Queen's College. It was attended by over 80 persons, a larger number than we have had for some years, including of course a number of members of the Australian Board. There were two guests of honour. The first was Dr Chandy, who addressed the dinner attendees at the beginning of the evening, inspiring us all with his vision of how the CMC is responding to the enormous challenges of its success. The reputation of the Hospital is so high and the pressure on its services so extreme that expansion must take place. The plans for the new hospital, which will have as one of its main focuses, the treatment of emergency victims of road accidents, are truly exciting. All present were fully convinced that Dr Chandy is the right person to lead the institution through this exciting but also most demanding period of change.

The second guest of honour was the main speaker of the evening, Dr Nitin Verma from Hobart, who enthralled his audience with a presentation of his life's work in the area of ophthalmology, starting in India and then moving to Papua and New Guinea, Australia and other countries in our region. All present were amazed at what he has been able to do with very limited resources, bringing life-changing aid to more than 50,000 of people suffering from eyes diseases and lack of treatment. Dr Verma stated that he saw his work as an extension of the vision of care for disadvantaged and destitute that he had embraced while studying at the CMC in Vellore.

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The dinner was a remarkable success and a great deal of the credit must go to our Events coordinator, Mrs Evelyn Lehmann, ably assisted by other members of the executive, with a particular mention of Mrs Louise Joy.

The year was also marked by discussions on the future of the group. Our starting point has been the Guidelines put together in 2014 by Mrs Liz Guiver and her executive. The Guidelines contain the aims and objectives of the Friends, which can be summarised as follows:

- (1) To promote knowledge of, interest in and financial support for the work of the CMC.
- (2) To attract persons and organisations to the work that the Friends are doing.
- (3) To work together with the Australian Board of the Friends of Vellore.

These aims and objectives must be at the forefront of our minds as we go about our work. In modern parlance they combine the tasks of 'friendraising' and fundraising. Some discussion was instigated by my predecessor as to how important fundraising can be at a time when the CMC has budgets in the tens of millions and needs to raise similar amounts of money to build the new planned facilities. It was agreed that fundraising, no matter how modest in the larger perspective, remained essential. There are many activities at the Hospital and the College that can be assisted, for example the Director of Development's fund for cases of emergency assistance to patients who lack the resources to pay for essential treatment. Donations also allow the supporters of the CMC to make their personal contribution to its work and thereby increase their sense of involvement.

As noted at the beginning of this report, it has been a year of transition. Much work remains to be done to place the activities of the FOVV on a new footing. I would like to put forward the following more limited objectives for the coming year 2016:

- (1) To increase our outreach to our group and beyond our group. This will involve looking at the publicity we generate, including the Newsletter, but also the use of other means.
- (2) To reconnect with other groups supporting the CMC, in particular the alumni of the College.
- (3) To increase our activity in the area of fundraising, for example by means of an annual giving appeal or other initiatives.

In relation to the second objective, a member of the Australian Board, Dr Stephen Aseervatham, has encouraged us to approach an alumnus or alumna to join our committee. I think this proposal is excellent. I look forward to discussion on these objectives during the meeting and thereafter.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the committee for the work that they have done this year. It has been a start, but there remains a huge amount that we can do. Let us be inspired by the wonderful work that the CMC does to intensify our own efforts on its behalf.

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JANUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

Treasurer's Report

- *Heidi Winnen*

It is my pleasure to present the Friends of Vellore, Victoria Financial Statements for the Year ended 30 June 2015. The financial statements were prepared by the FOVV Honorary Auditor, Gwenyth Bigger CPA from ABF Partners, 1299 Dandenong Road, Malvern East, 3145. Also presented to the FOVV President and Committee members are the following documents: Letter to President and Committee Members from the FOVV Honorary Auditor; Independent Review Report by the FOVV Honorary Auditor.

I believe that FOVV continues to play an important role in collecting and disbursing donations for Vellore CMC as well as fundraising and promoting fellowship at the Annual Dinner. In this financial year FOVV received a significant bequest for Vellore CMC. My notes on the financial reports are as follows:

1. Financial Position

FOVV commenced the financial year with funds accumulated of \$36,477.69 (investment account) and \$9,569.67 (cheque account) for a total of \$46,047.36 at 1 July 2014. Donations received during the year were \$14,565, plus \$825 fundraising (from sari and book sales) and interest of \$1,369.71. Other income of \$10,000 was received as a bequest from the Estate of Geoffrey Charlesworth received on 9 June 2015. Total income was \$26,759.61. Donations transferred were \$16,350 (see below) with expenses of \$10.40 bank fees and \$385 for 2014 AGM at Queens College. Total expenses were \$16,745.40. Net profit was substantially made up of the Charlesworth Bequest = \$10,014.21. Closing balance of bank accounts was as follows: \$37,692.09 (investment account) and \$18,369.48 (cheque account) for a total of \$55,061.57 at 30 June 2015.

2. 2014/15 Contributions to Vellore CMC

Date of transfer to Australian Vellore Board:	4/7/14	\$1,350
\$1,000	Development Office Emergency Fund	
\$350	Howard Norman Nursing Scholarship Fund	
Date of transfer to Australian Vellore Board:	24/6/15	\$15,000
\$12,000	CLHTC Community Lay-Leaders Health Training Certificate (Dr Sydney Paul)	
\$ 500	Howard Norman Nursing Scholarship Fund	
\$ 2,500	Unspecified	
Total Contributions to Vellore CMC for 2014/15 Financial Year		
\$12,000	CLHTC Community Lay-Leaders Health Training Certificate (Dr Sydney Paul)	
\$ 850	Nursing Scholarship Fund	
\$ 1,000	Development Office Emergency Fund	
\$ 2,500	Unspecified	
<u>\$16,350</u>	TOTAL	

3. Annual Fundraising Dinner for 2015

Note that there was no annual dinner in the 2014-15 financial year as the date of the dinner was postponed until August 2015 to coincide with the Australian Vellore Board AGM that was held in Melbourne. The total surplus for the August 2015 Annual Dinner was \$7,874.

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Thank you to Dr Nancy Nicholas, Viviane Harangozo and Heidi Winnen for putting this newsletter together.

FOVV COMMITTEE 2015 -2016

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Graduate Liaison Officer: Dr Helen McNamara

Assistant Newsletter Editor: Mr. Jim Richardson

General committee members

Professor Lynette Joubert,

Associate Professor Odette Spruyt

For donations to work at Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore:

Post Cheque or money order to: Treasurer Friends of Vellore, Victoria PO Box 81N Armadale North VIC 3143	Direct transfer or deposit to: Friends of Vellore Victoria Bendigo Bank BSB: 633000 Account: 139185151 Please email details of any deposits to FOVVTreasurer@gmail.com)
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