

# Friends of Vellore, Victoria

A division of Australian Board of Vellore Christian Medical College & Hospital Support Fund ABN 65 125 097 974



## February 2020 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,  
Please enjoy reading our latest newsletter.

### *From the President's pen*

I am writing to you only three weeks after I returned from Vellore, where I attended the Annual General Meeting of the Vellore Association, which owns and governs the College and Hospital. It was an inspiring experience to be present and hear and see (via PowerPoint) the great progress that the Institution is making. It is now a time of harvest. The grand vision of the previous Director, Dr Sunil Chandy, is coming to fruition, greatly aided by the careful and precise supervision of his successor, Dr J V Peter. The hospital at Chittoor is doing wonderful work an hour's drive from Vellore. The new hospital at Kannigapuram with its amazing trauma facilities, is nearly finished and will commence operations in July. It is huge and quite overwhelming. Even though the national Hindu government is not making things easy, the College and the Hospitals are flourishing. Their Christian commitment to serving the poor and marginalized continues unabated. They still very much need our help to be able to do this.

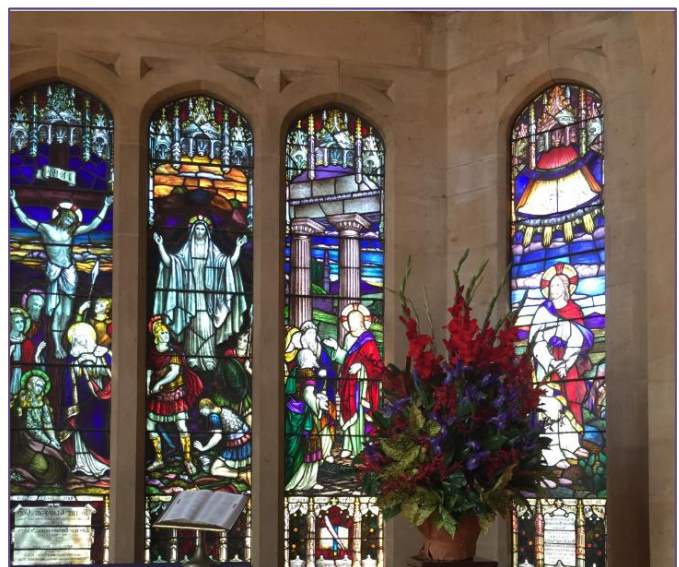
I would like to write much more, and will do so in a future Newsletter. But in the meantime, I thoroughly recommend the contents of this one. There is so much happening there that deserves our admiration and our support!

*David Runia*

### *Invitation to a recital of choral and organ music 17 May*

Two years ago, we were treated to breathtaking performances by the Queen's College choir and organist David Agg in the magnificent Queen's College Chapel. We are delighted to be able to extend an invitation to join us again for an afternoon of music and a brief update on CMCH including the launch of our 2020 Annual Giving Campaign. The recital will commence at 3pm on Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> of May in the Queen's College Chapel – gold coin donation.

RSVP [FOVVsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:FOVVsecretary@gmail.com)



*The Queen's College Chapel stained glass windows*

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### *CMC in the news – excerpts from CMC Pulse December 2019*

2020 marks 120 years since Ida Scudder, CMC's founder, commenced her work saving lives in Vellore. In the Hindustan Times (June 2019) a comparison of the hospitals AIIMS (Delhi), CMC (Vellore), Cedars-Sinai (Los Angeles) and St Thomas' (London) showed that CMC treated the most outpatients per day (5,982) and that it was the most efficient with the lowest per patient/bed expense. In other publicity for the hospital, it is noted that Bill Gates (Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist) singled out Vellore in his keynote address to his Foundation's Goalkeepers 2019 event, highlighting that in Vellore 98 of 100 children are likely to see their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, the same as in wealthy countries, and in sad contrast to other districts in India where almost 10% of children don't live to reach 5 years of age.

### *An uplifting CMC pulse article published Feb 21*



*Surgeon, Dr Mary Verghese*

Dr. Mary Verghese had everything well planned. She had just finished MBBS at CMC and wanted to specialise in Gynaecology. But on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1954, the bus she was traveling in crashed. Her back was broken and so were her dreams. She thought her career as a doctor was over. But Dr. Paul Brand invited her to join him doing hand surgeries for people with leprosy. She found she could operate sitting down, and became world famous as the "Wheelchair Surgeon". She set up India's first Rehabilitation Institute for people with spinal cord injuries, here in Vellore – CMC's Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. It continues to empower people with disabilities to face the future with hope.

Every year the department organises a grand Mela for all their *Rehab Graduates* living within 100 km of Vellore. The past patients have free medical check-ups. Reunited with friends they take part enthusiastically in two days of entertainment, sports and games. Their energy is contagious!

Dr Debbie Skeil, who together with Hugh Skeil, spoke at our 2017 Annual Dinner, is a volunteer doctor in this department and gave us a detailed account of the Mela.



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### *A message from the Australian Vellore Board (summary)*

Please refer to the AVB website <http://australianfov.net.au/2020/01/06/news-letter/> to read the unabridged newsletter written by AVB President, Dr Stephen Aseervoatham.

The AVB is keen to keep all the Australian branches of FOV informed of the activities of the AVB over the past year. We congratulate the Board on all the work it is able to do on Vellore's behalf.

Funds transferred to CMC totalled \$250,000 for 2018/2019 – including the following

1. Patient Care - \$55,000 - divided between

- a. Endowment Funds ( \$30,000),
- b. Low Cost Effective Care Unit ( \$15,000), and
- c. Patient to Patient ( \$10,000).

In this last category, every AUD 200 is supplemented by AUD 800 by CMC making AUD 1,000 worth of free medical care available to an individual patient.

2. Education - Scholarships for Nursing and Allied Health Students - \$24,000

3. Equipment – \$60,000 –

- a. UK and USA FOVs joined with us to provide a mobile diagnostic unit for the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Program – our share was \$18,000.
- b. UK FOV joined with us to equip a modern biochemistry laboratory in the Kotagiri Medical Fellowship Hospital – our share was \$21,000 (S.A. FOV has recently raised A\$12,600 towards other pieces of equipment)
- c. FOV Sweden shared the cost of a replacement vehicle for the Community Medicine Department (CHAD) – our share was \$21,000.

4. Staff Development – Overseas fellowships for Medical & Allied Health staff - \$18,000

Other designated donations from individuals and FOVs are also sent in the annual transfer.

**AVB AGM** was held in Melbourne last August when Dr J.V. Peter was able to be present via a video conference. The office bearers were re-elected.

President – Dr Stephen Aseervoatham

Vice President – Prof. David Runia

Secretary – Evelyn Lehmann

Treasurer – Richard Caitens

Publicity Officer – Prof. Chellam Kirubakaran

**The Yelagiri Retreat Centre** had been planned some years ago, and will be completed soon.

**AVB Constitution** is to be redrafted in 2020.

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**Alumni of CMC** have donated about \$17,000 to support some urgent projects at CMC, with their classmates. They have also helped with medical placements for staff from CMC to work here while on their sabbatical leave. The experience and knowledge they obtain here benefits CMC when they return.

**Thank you.** The Friends of Vellore in Australia would not exist but for your kindness and hard work. We thank God for the opportunity he has given us to participate in the Christian Medical mission at CMC.

### *FOVV life member Louise Joy has returned to Melbourne*



Dear friends of Louise, please note that Louise is now living in Roberts Cottage, Uniting Age Well, 75 Thames St Box Hill.

She would love to hear from her friends and can be reached on 0491 137 561.

Louise's memoir 'Memories of a Missionary Kid' was published last November. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, please reply to this e-mail and we will assist you.

### *FOVV AGM*

Thank you to those who attended the AGM, and thank you to all our supporters – those who donated and those who spread the word about FOVV and CMCH Vellore. It is always uplifting to talk about CMCH Vellore and to acknowledge our contribution to support the poor and the worthy institution CMCH Vellore.

We are delighted to welcome Mr Ken Gilbertson onto the committee in the position of treasurer. Thank you for joining us Ken!

A note on money raised for CMCH:

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For the year ending 30 June 2019 a total of \$29,906 was transferred to the AVB, of this amount \$2,100 was for general expenses (this was not from donations received) and \$27,806 was from donations. All directed donations have been allocated as specified (e.g. scholarships, annual giving options and the CLHTC program).

We had invited Rev John Connan to talk at the AGM. A summary of his talk follows.

### **My love affair with India**

The start of John's account went right back to his student days. After living at Queen's College while studying science and the theology, he took the opportunity to pursue most of his theological studies in India, spending three years at the United Theological College in Bangalore, South India. Before going to India he had been told that there are only two reactions to India – You love it or hate it: there's no in-between. UTC Bangalore was a most stimulating place. There were students from many countries and different church backgrounds. The College motto was almost the same as CMC – Greek for "not to be served, but to serve".

After his first year at UTC, on his way to the World Council of Churches meeting in New Delhi, where he and several of his fellow students had been invited to be student aides, he visited Agra, the Taj Mahal and Red Fort. He also dropped in at the Australian Methodist Mission Hospital at Azamgarrh, where to his surprise he met Dr Ted Gault who was visiting at the same time. Ted was the father of John Gault, a medical student at Queen's at the same time as John. Ted told John that when he and his wife, Dr Edna Gault, had gone to Azamgarrh in 1937, it was impossible for a man to give any medical treatment to women. Dr Gault also told of going to a dinner with an important official and being reassured that he didn't need to hurry away, and when he eventually was taken to the station, the train was waiting for him and his permission to leave. At Vellore Dr Ted showed him the Men's Dormitory, which Ted had helped plan, like Queen's College. John attended the College Chapel, and visited the Hospital, the Leprosy work and the Schell Eye Hospital and met some of the Chaplaincy team.

Back in Melbourne in 1968 he was appointed Victorian State Secretary for Methodist Overseas Missions, involving meetings of the Mission Liaison Group, and the Friends of Vellore, which Ted Gault had set up in 1943 while back home training for his Pathology position at Vellore. Some years later he was invited to be a Victorian delegate to the Australian Vellore Board meeting in Sydney, and became Secretary and later President of FOVV, and briefly President of AVB.

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Long Service leave gave him the opportunity to attend the 50th Anniversary of the Church of South India in 1988 at Chennai. He was invited by the Bishop of Madras, a former fellow student at UTC, and also visited CMC as a representative of AVB.

In January 2007 he attended the Annual meeting at CMC as AVB representative, and was impressed by the developments and the internet connection to many Christian mission hospitals around India. He visited the Chittoor Campus for the laying of the foundation stone. There was a story of a Muslim Head of Department insisting that all his staff come to Bible study – which he led! He was really impressed with the Solid Waste Management dealing with hospital waste products sensitively, creatively, economically, and ecologically.

What the CMC is achieving is quite remarkable in John's view. Student fees are 1% of the actual cost. 70% of graduates serve in India, of which 80% serve in peripheral areas with many doing pioneering work.

Medical issues remain life-threatening for many of the 300 million who live close to the poverty line. CMC has a specific mandate for serving the poor. It most certainly deserves and needs continued support of Friends of Vellore in Australia, Canada, USA, UK, Germany, Sweden, and India.



*John Connan as a young man in India.*



*John and Ann Connan 2019*

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

<b>Post Cheque or money order to:</b>  Treasurer Friends of Vellore, Victoria P.O. Box 455 ESSENDON NORTH VIC 3041	<b>Direct transfer or deposit to:</b> Friends of Vellore Victoria Bendigo Bank BSB: 633000 Account: 139185151 Please email details of any deposits to <a href="mailto:FOVVTreasurer@gmail.com">FOVVTreasurer@gmail.com</a>
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For the Annual Giving Campaign, please select the program/s you wish to fund:

- Development Department Emergency Fund
- Funding sight-preserving eye surgery
- Endowment Fund for Allied Health Scholarships
- General support fund Australian Vellore Board

For further information on this campaign, contact the Secretary.

### **FOVV COMMITTEE 2019–2020**

Patron: Mr. David Price OAM

President: Professor David Runia

[FOVVPresident@gmail.com](mailto:FOVVPresident@gmail.com)

Vice President: Rev. Colin Honey

Secretary: Mrs Viviane Harangozo

[FOVVSecretary@gmail.com](mailto:FOVVSecretary@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Mr Ken Gilbertson

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Minutes Secretary: Rev. John Connan

General committee member: Mr. Jim Richardson

General committee member: Neil Champion

General committee member: Professor Lynette Joubert

Alumni Liaison: Dr Sunil Datta