

## **Friends of Suai Community Taskforce 2007 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **1. Introduction**

This is the Seventh Annual Report of the City of Port Phillip Friends of Suai (FoS) Taskforce Advisory Committee, which covers the activities of the Committee for the period January to December 2007.

The Taskforce was established in March 2000, Xanana Gusmao and City of Port Phillip (CoPP) Councillors signed a Statement of Friendship in May, 2000. The signatories to this statement affirm the development of a ten-year relationship between the elected representatives of Suai and the City of Port Phillip based on friendship and mutual respect.

The Purpose: To work with and assist the City of Port Phillip Council to develop sustainable and productive relationships between the Port Phillip and Suai communities.

The Taskforce is undertaking a review of the Friends of Suai program 2004-8 which will be completed early 2008.

### **2. Membership**

The current membership structure of the Friends of Suai Community Taskforce – 2007 consists of:

1. Bill Armstrong (Chair),
2. David Brand (Treasurer)
3. Councillor Karen Sait,
4. Pat Jessen (Coordinator),
5. Desleigh Kent (Secretary)
6. Patsy Thatcher,
7. John Collins,
8. Christine Jolly,
9. Rosemary Patterson,
10. Balthasar Kehi,
11. Jen Hughes,
12. Ann Wigglesworth
13. Steven Kolt,
14. Elizabeth Walpole
15. Liz Milsom

### **3. Meetings**

The **Friends of Suai, Community Taskforce**, met on eleven occasions during 2007:

- 14 February 2007
- 14 March
- 11 April
- 09 May
- 13 June
- 11 July
- 08 August
- 12 September
- 10 October
- 14 November
- 12 December

Meetings were conducted at St Kilda Town Hall

Guests who regularly attended the meetings were, Committee members, visitors from E Timor, organisations and individuals wanting to work with or form relationships with Friends of Suai, observers from the community,

The Secretary & Pat Jessen, Coordinator, Friends of Suai and other members of the Friends of Suai community Taskforce provide administrative support

#### **4. Work Program and Issues Arising**

The Committee's objectives are:

To promote the Friends of Suai program throughout the Port Phillip community

1. To encourage community members to participate and provide support to Friends of Suai.
2. To work in partnership with the Suai Community Collective in identifying appropriate projects and activities
3. To make recommendations to council officers about funding of programs and activities and the expenditure of funds raised
4. Where appropriate, to liaise with wider Victorian contacts and networks related to East Timor, in order to promote and support Friends of Suai
6. To organise and support fundraising activities for the Friends of Suai program

The Committee's 2007 achievements/ program included:

- The annually elected Suai community Centre (SCC) Commission provides leadership and strengthening of community relationships. Approximately 50% of the commission turned over in the last year with the other 50% providing continuity to the Commission structure. The development of the SCC commission provides potential leadership for assisting Suai to build local-level government into the future.
- In 2007 the relocation of the Suai Community Centre was achieved with basic renovation. The new building is a good swap, an appropriate building for the new centre. It has plenty of light, good size rooms and land where additional buildings can be built if required. A long term lease through the department of land and property is being developed with the district administrator.
- The nursery agro forestry project was a real success with 10,000 seedlings produced. The main focus of the project was the 6,000 seedlings for one village to abate erosion, a further 4,000 much needed seedlings were distributed in other sub districts.
- Ten orphaned children plus one young man with a disability are recipients of education scholarships funded in partnership with Jewish Aid Australia based in Port Phillip, approx \$5,000 for the duration of the students' education has been donated.
- 300 locally-made chairs were officially presented by the FoS Coordinator on behalf of Fos/Port Phillip to the Suai public secondary school in February 2007.
- Two levels of women's sewing training contributed to enhanced employment opportunities for participants in 2007.
- The highlight of 2007 was the visit to Australia by Simao da Silva Barreto, Suai Community Centre Co-ordinator. The purpose of his visit was to meet

the many supporters of Friends of Suai in Port Phillip and present a program evaluation prepared by the Suai Commission, staff and partners. Seventy people attended a public meeting where Simao expressed gratitude for FoS donations that he said were really making a difference to peoples' lives. He had good exposure to council and local organisations.

- Simao also spent time in the schools of Port Phillip visiting Elwood College, St Columba's, Galilee and Elwood Primary schools. He attended a regional schools civics conference at Caulfield Grammar. At Elwood College he observed classes and addressed a special meeting with Year 12 politics students studying democracy and citizenship. Michael Danby MP, Evan Thornley, Parliamentary Secretary to the Victorian Premier and Cr Janet Cribbes attended the lunch time meeting.
- Cr Karen Sait on behalf of Mayor and councillors commissioned a traditional East Timor Tais Weaving from Suai for the new St Kilda town hall. This will mean that the young women will learn how to produce authentic dyes and thread to weave the Tais.
- A team from Alternative Technology Association and local Suai team of technicians trained in 2006 installed solar power to 3 remote health clinics in 2007. The solar panels were funded in partnership by Rotary Balwyn, Oxfam Australia, and City of Kiama. Two further remote health clinics will have solar panels installed by the local technicians, a total 6 health clinics since 2006 benefitting from essential power through FOS & partners.
- Donation of 30 computers from the City of Port Phillip to be sent to Suai for community use, the project will train technicians to maintain the equipment linked with Infoxchange Australia's East Timor project. The potential to develop this initiative by ongoing donations from CoPP is enormous with economic development opportunities for Suai.
- On going support to the Suai Youth centre of the community media unit with equipment and initial training; community media is a simple and strategic way to provide education programs to illiterate communities, especially programs using local language and image, on social issues like health, HIV education and agriculture. It also provides an excellent opportunity for youth self-expression.
- On going support for the Suai based youth theatre group established by FoS funding and provides training in acting, circus, clowning, music and theatre dramas.

### Major Issues

In 2007 East Timor conducted both presidential and parliamentary elections with a huge voter turnout. A coalition government lead by the Xanana Gusmao's new party CNRT was sworn in August 2007 with Xanana, Prime Minister and Jose Ramos Horta the new President of East Timor, and Fretilin party MPs are now in opposition. The situation in East Timor is now relatively calm, international security forces remain in country, providing additional security as the new government in this young democracy begins to reorganise the government and implement election promises. The legacy of almost 2 years of internal conflict has resulted in further setbacks for

this struggling nation. The remote and rural areas continue to suffer the lack of financial injection to assist and move local economies

The SCC Commission and staff have continued to respond to the crisis in E Timor with determination to provide ongoing activities, which meet basic needs, promote training opportunities and sustainable development through the Friends of Suai relationship and other NGO partnerships. There is a renewed optimism that the country will now move forward in a positive way, in the knowledge that there is still much to be done to alleviate poverty and provide opportunity for ordinary people.

The Suai Commission has continued to grow in its community development & governance approach with the support of Friends of Suai. The skills development and good governance within the Suai community centre is apparent through its communication and reporting mechanisms. The ongoing support from City of Port Phillip through Friends of Suai is deeply appreciated by the Suai Commission and continues to be expressed in communiqués regularly.

## **5. Reporting**

A copy of the minutes of each Friends of Suai Community Taskforce meeting minutes are circulated to all Friends of Suai Community Taskforce members including appointed the CoPP designated councillor, council officers as appropriate and designated community members. Minutes are available through the Coordinator, Friends of Suai

A Report to Council was tabled in March 2007 reporting on the Coordinators 2007 visit to Suai; A report to Council in July 2007 outlined the terms of reference for the FoS Review being conducted 2007-8.

The Committee's Annual Report to Council outlines the activities and findings of the Committee each year.

## **6. Recommendations**

### **6.1. Term of Committee**

The current term of the Friends of Suai Community Taskforce expires on 31 December 2007.

We recommend that the Friends of Suai Taskforce continue its important work of supporting the relationship agreement between Port Phillip and Suai. The Suai Commission and staff have responded to the crisis in E Timor with determination to provide ongoing activities, which meet basic needs, promote training opportunities and sustainable development through the Friends of Suai relationship and other NGO partnerships. The Suai Commission has matured in its community development & governance approach over recent years with the support of Friends of Suai. The skills development and good governance within the Suai community centre is apparent through its communication and reporting mechanisms. The visit by the Suai Coordinator once again showed the value of the face to face exchange between our two cities. The ongoing support from City of Port Phillip through Friends of Suai is deeply appreciated by the Suai Commission and expressed in communiqués regularly.

**6.2. Terms of Reference**

This report was prepared by Pat Jessen, Coordinator Friends of Suai and confirmed by the Committee's Chairperson, Bill Armstrong OA

Signature



\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_21 January 2008\_\_\_\_\_