

Friends of Suai Community Taskforce 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

1. Introduction

This is the eighth Annual Report of the City of Port Phillip Friends of Suai (FoS) Taskforce Advisory Committee, which covers the activities of the FoS Community Steering Committee for the period January to December 2008.

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.

A Review of the Friends of Suai Program 2004-7 was presented and endorsed by Council in June 2008.

2. Membership

The current membership structure of the Friends of Suai Community Taskforce – 2008 consists of:

1. Bill Armstrong AO (Chair),
Retired: Board Member Indigenous Community Volunteers, and Chair Action Aid Australia; Former President of Australian Council for International Development & CEO Australian Volunteers International
2. Councillor Rachel Powning
CoPP Council representative on FoS Taskforce
3. David Brand (Treasurer),
Former CoPP Councillor, Architect, Lecturer Architecture & Design Melbourne University
4. Pat Jessen (FoS Coordinator),
International & Community Development Worker
5. Desleigh Kent (Secretary)
Retired: Nurse Educator at Swinburne University of Technology (TAFE), Chairperson Council of the Uniting Church of St Kilda
6. Patsy Thatcher,
Retired: Anthropologist, Lecturer Australian Catholic University and U3A Port Phillip – Asian and SE Asian Studies, Masters Thesis *Timorese in Exile*
7. John Collins,
Retired: Publisher Jacaranda Press, former Deputy Chair Literature, Australia Council, Director University Extension, University South Pacific, former Councillor St Helens, Tasmania,
8. Balthasar Kehi,
Sessional Lecturer Melbourne University, National East Timorese from Fatumea, District of Covalima, former Catholic priest
9. Jen Hughes
Local Port Phillip documentary filmmaker, former manager of South Australia Media Centre, Media trainer,
10. Ann Wigglesworth,

- International Development Specialist, PhD thesis submitted *Becoming Citizens: Civil Society Activism and Social Change in Timor Leste*,
11. Elizabeth Walpole,
Retired: International VCE Coordinator RMIT, English for specific purpose to overseas qualified nurses, Librarian, Suzuki piano teacher,
 12. Liz Milsom,
Local Artist and Community Care Worker Port Phillip
 13. Glenn Staunton
Educational psychologist and management consultant; Associate of Leadership Victoria & Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee at Cabrini Health.
 14. Sr Rosemary Patterson RSM,
Mercy Sister, Coordinator East Timor Program, Carmelite Mission Middle Park, former ESL lecturer, Baucau East Timor Teacher's College, former school principal.
 15. Bek Barson
Community Development and Welfare Worker, Youth leader Jewish Community Caulfield

3. Meetings

The **Friends of Suai, Community Taskforce**, met on ten occasions during 2008:

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

Meetings were conducted at St Kilda Town Hall

People 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 2008 achievements/ program included:

- The FoS Review 5.1 Assessment of Work Undertaken by FoS 2004-07 examines the work in detail, highlighting significant accomplishments during this period and provides recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the program.
- Three FoS Committee members provided valuable training and support to the community and youth centres visiting Suai in 2008:
 - Jen Hughes provided a 3 week workshop on web based videos produced by students at the Suai Youth Centre. She raised her own funds to finance the visit.
 - Desleigh Kent, Secretary of the FoS Committee, taught English language classes at the community centre over 3 week period financing her travel with modest assistance from Port Philip.
 - John Collins, FoS Committee member taught English language and assisted the staff of the community centre with community planning over 3 weeks, he also financing his travel with modest assistance from Port Phillip.
- The establishment of a Suai Community Centre (SCC) has been an important civic base for a grass roots community development program to develop. This centre provides a well managed and accountable centre for funding and activities across the district. The elected Suai Community Centre Commission provides leadership and strengthening of community relationships. The makeup of the commission is sector based and represents district administration and community. The development of the SCC provides potential leadership for assisting Suai to build local-municipal government into the future.
 - The Coordinator, SCC Simao da Silva Barreto was keynote speaker at a session on the community solar installations in Covalima in cooperation with ATA at the VLGA Friendship Conference in Dili in June 2008. The Fos Coordinator and Secretary attended the conference as well as Sub District Coordinator Fohoren and Youth Centre Coordinator representing the District Administrator Suai
 - The centre had some 330 students enrol in English Language and Maths classes during the 2008 school closure period which provided valuable training for youth.
 - A request for Teacher Training in English Language was received by FoS from the community centre in 2008 and a project design for Australian Volunteer ESL teachers to be implemented in 2009.

Council's support to this remote and rural community has been extremely beneficial in providing small scale development and building of human resources in this community.

Agriculture

- Veg-Out Community Garden St Kilda funds have provided the first practical demonstration plot in permaculture at the Agriculture High School in Suai. A new Jackfruit tree program is also providing much needed agriculture modeling in the district. This 2 hectare project is based on bringing this highly nutritious tree stock to the district for cultivation.

Education focus in 2008

- Five FoS senior scholarship holders completed Bachelor of Education Degree at UNTL; Nine orphaned children plus one young man with a disability continue with education scholarships funded in partnership with Jewish Aid Australia; 100 locally-made table & chairs were presented to 2 Suai public primary schools;
- Portraits of Suai Youth were painted, sent and exhibited in the Port Phillip Youth Portraits Exhibition at the Town Hall Gallery and later exhibited at Elwood College.
- St Kilda Primary School presented self- portraits for Zumalai primary school in the district with a donation of art materials; Zumalai Primary School sent self-portraits to St Kilda primary school in return.

Highlights in Port Phillip

- The highlight in 2008 was the Timor Leste Textiles exhibition forum and market at St Kilda Town Hall Gallery (Exhibition 3-30 Sept) exploring meaning, makers and markets of Tais the hand woven textiles of East Timor. A one day Forum with keynote speakers included Robyn Maxwell, Senior Curator of Asian Art at National Gallery of Australia; Ofelia Napoleao, Alola Foundation; Joanna Barkmann, Curator, Southeast Asian Art and Material Culture, Museum and Gallery NT and Sara Niner, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Monash University in cooperation with Alola Foundation, ETWA and Monash University, IWDA, METAC and East Timor friendship groups. The highly successful community event also commemorated the September 1999 Suai church massacre.
- Kirsty Sword Gusmao the President of Alola Foundation visited the Exhibition whilst in Melbourne and met with Mayor and Councillors.
- Fundraising achieved donations from the Rotary Club of Balwyn and general community who have willingly provided \$50,000 funding in 2008 for the first school library at the Suai Public Secondary School. This is another civic building that will benefit students and other schools in the town with access to books and education resources which they do not currently exist.
- Welcomed the Minister for Administration Arcângelo Leite and Director Local Government Abilio Caetano to City of Port Phillip to discuss the friendship agreement, development of the community centre and a formal lease.
- FoS facilitated a visit to Port Phillip from Mayor and General Manager Kiama Council NSW to discuss the evolving friendship with Zumalai in the Covalima District (pop.14,000) and MOU arrangements based on the Port Phillip model.
- In cooperation with the Port Phillip Library Service, FoS coordinated the Annual Booksale with \$1500 proceeds donated to FoS; FoS served & provided East Timor Coffee promotion at the opening of the new St Kilda Town Hall and Administration block; FoS Information stalls at Human Rights Forum and International Women's Day events.

Health Outposts and Solar Energy Installations

- In partnership with the Alternative Technology Association and Suai community centre \$5,000 was raised through Irish Aid in Suai to provide half

the funds needed for solar electricity for 10 remote health outposts across the district. This is the first *external Grant* received by the Community Centre and which met the requirements of the agency indicating accountabilities are in place. The solar installation was completed by local team of technicians. A solar upgrade to the community radio, the community and youth centres' were also completed in 2008.

Information Technology

- Further donations of Computers from City of Port Phillip to InfoXchange for refurbishment for Suai were given. The potential to develop this initiative by ongoing donations from CoPP can provide economic opportunities in Suai.
- The development of a Green PC enterprise in Suai to replicate the Baucau model continued to be discussed and designed in 2008 with a visit to Suai from IT Baucau and CEO InfoXchange Andrew Mahar from Australia and Emanuel Braz, Consultant to International Centre for Journalists planning to establish broadband internet facilities at the centres.
- YoMatre Youth Media established by FoS, won first prize in Independent Film Festival in Dili for film on traditional reconciliation. 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.
- The construction and development of the Suai Media Space by Jen Hughes continued during 2008 with training by Jen in Suai in producing web-based films. The site is an exciting cutting edge web site that documents the historical events in Suai and aims to provide a voice through its social networking site to engage with people in Timor and around the world.

Major Issues

The tension of previous years due to political conflict eased in mid 2008, both in Dili and the districts following the surrender of Lieutenant Gastao Salshina, the rebel leader wanted in relation to the shooting incident of the President, Jose Ramos Horta and following the death of Alfredo Reinado in February 2008. Freedom of movement returned to Dili especially during the day, local people were moving freely from the the districts. There was still caution at night and the security forces were in place around the capital. There was a feel of renewed hope with peace and calm renewed.

The announcement by government of plans for a supply- base in Suai and rapid development of oil and gas and brought forward the immediacy and need of skill development, targeting youth, and others also. The community centre staff and commission requested skill development target technical and language training programs.

The remote and rural areas of Timor Leste continue to suffer the lack of financial injection to assist and move local economies and provide much needed infrastructure.

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 June 2008 reporting on the recommendations of the Review Friends of Suai 2004-07

The 2007 Annual Report was prepared and presented to Council in January 2008.

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 2010.

It is recommended that the Friends of Suai Taskforce continue in its important work of supporting the relationship agreement between Port Phillip and Suai. The Suai Community Centre Commission and staff continue to develop activities that will benefit the Suai community and the outlying district with ongoing activities which meet their basic needs, promote training opportunities and sustainable development.

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 AO



Signature _____

Date _____ 13 June 2008 _____