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AVFS Newsletter

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Message from the President

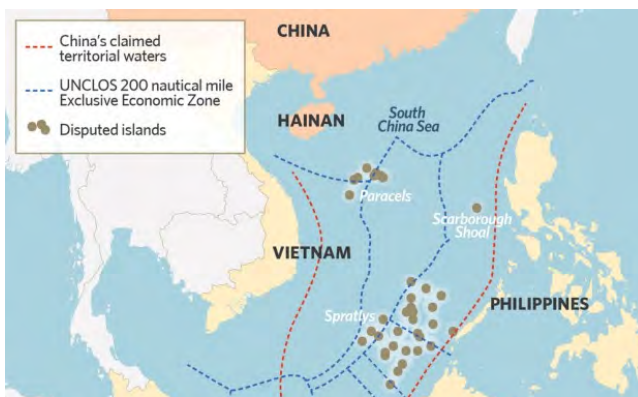


It has been a long time since our last newsletter. The reason for this is that we have put more energy into our Facebook page, where we are now approaching 400 "likes". But the newsletter is back, and hopefully you will see it more frequently from here on in. Many things have happened, with much to be pleased about. The most significant of these is perhaps that we are now a recognised charity in the eyes of the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC). There are lots of other items of interest in this 2016 edition of our newsletter, which I hope you will enjoy, and share with your friends and colleagues.

Yours sincerely

Kim Sampson, President, AVFS

International Tribunal and South China Seas



An international tribunal in The Hague delivered a sweeping rebuke on Tuesday of China's behavior in the South China Sea, including its construction of artificial islands, and found that its expansive claim to sovereignty over the waters had no legal

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basis. The landmark case, brought by the Philippines, was seen as an important crossroads in China's rise as a global power and in its

rivalry with the United States, and it could force Beijing to reconsider its assertive tactics in the region or risk being labeled an international outlaw. It was the first time the Chinese government had been summoned before the international justice system.

In its most significant finding, the tribunal rejected China's argument that it enjoys historic rights over most of the South China Sea. That could give the governments of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam more leverage in their own maritime disputes with Beijing.

In an early indication of the regional response, Vietnam quickly issued a statement endorsing the tribunal's decision.

Based on a New York Times article (12/July/2016)

Australian Delegation to Viet Nam

On March 21 to 25, a delegation consisting of Prof David Huang and Dr Kim Pham of the Walter & Eliza Institute of Medical Research (WEHI), and AVFS President Kim Sampson travelled to Hanoi to investigate the potential for a student exchange, and a science and medical collaboration between Australia and Viet Nam. There was also the opportunity for Kim Pham (who is also the AVFS National Secretary) to do some good work on behalf of the AVFS.



The first item of work was a meeting with our friends at the Vietnam-Australia Friendship Association (VAFA), including Chairman Nhung. There was a long discussion about our mutual objectives, and the range of potential activities that might be possible. We were then treated to a very fine meal with the VAFA team, along with members of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO).

The next day was a meeting with the General Department of Preventive Medicine (GDPM) at the Ministry of Health. It was interesting to learn that Viet Nam has 28 notifiable diseases, including Malaria and Hepatitis B, and that Australia was supporting Viet Nam in its fight against drug resistant Malaria.

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The next meeting was with the Hanoi School of Public Health (HSPH). It was learnt that in Viet Nam, any director of a hospital, school, university or health administration body must first go through the Hanoi School of Public Health to do a course in health administration. We were advised that a new building is currently being constructed with 6 levels of modern lab research facilities, 8km from Hanoi International Airport, and is expected to be completed in 1 to 2 years. HSPH is launching a genetic surveillance study between breast cancer and environmental factors, in which WEHI could potentially collaborate on the area of breast cancer epidemiology.

Meetings were arranged with both the Hanoi Medical University (HMU) and the Institute of Preventive Medicine and Public Health (IPMPH), both separately and jointly, where fruitful discussions were had between the various parties. Presentations of a beautifully etched glass paper weight from the WEHI were made to the HMU President, Prof Nguyen Duc Hinh, and the Director and Deputy Director of the IPMPH, Prof Le Thi Huong, and Dr Nguyen Van Huy respectively. We then had the great privilege of attending the home of Prof Le Thi Huong for a traditional, and very generous, Vietnamese feast.



Next was a visit to the National Cancer Hospital, being a 1000 bed hospital linked to the Hanoi Medical University, and its research institutes. The hospital has expertise in Phase 2 & 3 clinical trials. The training of doctors is usually undertaken abroad.

Kim Pham was then able to carry out the valuable work of the AVFS, with a visit to the Thien Phuoc Charity Centre, in Bac Giang Province, where she was introduced to Ms Song, who started the centre. The centre is able to accommodate 50 children/young adults at any one time, with 700-800 children have been helped over the past 23 years. A typical stay is 8-10 years. Kim was also introduced to:

- Thien An: 3 years old, abandoned 7 days ago, and who suffered a lot of physical abuse
- Hung: 18 years old and deaf. He can perform beautiful embroidery (he gave AVFS one of his pieces as thanks).

Kim presented Ms Song with a US\$500 donation from the AVFS to support their ongoing work.

Kim then went on to the Vietnam Association for Victims of Vietnam (VAVA), where she also gave a donation of US\$500 from the AVFS. The funds will be used to help with the construction of wheelchairs. VAVA has since donated 700 wheelchairs and

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has good connections with factories that manufacture them. Other funds that are raised by VAVA are used for the protection and assistance of agent orange and dioxane victims. US\$57 million been raised since 2004.

Australia Vietnam Young Leaders Dialogue (AVYLD)

The Australia Vietnam Young Leadership Dialogue (AVYLD) is an independent non-profit initiative that was established to nurture relationships, promote engagement and incubate collaboration between Australian and Vietnamese young leaders from a broad spectrum of society. Through people to people links, we believe the bilateral relationship between Australia and Vietnam can be strengthened to contribute to the development of each respective nation.

The AVYLD's mission is to facilitate a deeper understanding and collaboration between Australian and Vietnamese young leaders to enhance the economic, social and cultural prosperity of Australia and Vietnam, a mission not too far removed from that of the AVFS.

An annual dialogue will be held every year in Australia or Vietnam. The first dialogue will be held in Sydney in May 2017, involving up to 30 delegates from Australia and Vietnam along with various speakers and partners from diverse sectors including business, education, policy, non-for-profit and the arts. In between dialogues, various events and workshops will be held concurrently in Vietnam and Australia, with delegates working with peers and mentors around specific challenges and opportunities.

[More information can be found here](#)

Dragon Fruit from Viet Nam to Australia



Australia has commenced work on market access for fresh dragon fruit from Viet Nam into Australia.

Fresh dragon fruit is one of Viet Nam's top priorities for horticultural

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market access. Australia has already undertaken preliminary work on the assessment, including reviewing

pests and diseases, following strong collaboration between the Governments of Australia and Viet Nam. Further work on risk assessment will be carried out in the next few months, including a field visit to production areas and an assessment of production and export practices. A draft report is expected to be released for public comment later in 2016.

Australia is also progressing access for other types of Vietnamese fruits. The first consignments of Vietnamese lychees were exported to Australia in June 2015, with 32 tonnes being exported in 2015. Australia completed a risk assessment for Vietnamese mangoes in November 2015 and work is ongoing to finalise trading arrangements.

Changing the Life of a Viet Nam Mum



On Feb 3rd, 2016 Michael Redding presented a donation from the Rotary Club of Werribee of a Kien Tuong Tricycle Wheelchair to Ba (Nguyen Thi Ba), a 39 year old disabled mum living in Phuoc An village in Vietnam.

Werribee Rotary had sent the money for this wheelchair to Anh (Nguyen Hong Anh), a key person in a wonderful Vietnamese charity based in Ho Chi Minh City, called NTCM (Người Tôi Cứu Mang - 'The Person I Look After').

Phuoc An village, where Ba lives, is about 170 km south from HCMC.

Three years ago Ba fell 4 metres from a bamboo ladder when harvesting black pepper, severely damaging her spinal

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cord and losing the use of her legs. Her husband deserted her, leaving her with their two children, a son (Trong) now 17 yrs and a daughter (Kym Thuy) now 9 yrs, who are both at school. A very good friend who owns a house has given her some rooms to live in, while neighbours and NTCM have been providing food.

Ba quickly discovered she could propel her new wheelchair very easily by pushing the steering column back and forwards. She was pretty excited on her first 'drive'. Suddenly she now has mobility and the opportunity to travel by herself quite far from home - to go to the market and to visit friends. With her wheelchair her life can expand in new directions that were never possible before.

Michael, an active AVFS national committee member, has a great interest in Vietnam, which began in 2010 on his first visit there, when he met Dung (Nguyen Cuu Dung) in Hue. Dung missed out on schooling due to the war, but has amazing abilities with languages, having taught himself English plus Dutch and French and three Vietnam minority languages. The two of them have become very close friends, and Dung acts as Michael's translator when they are together in Vietnam.

Climate Change and the Mekong Delta



A forum organized jointly by the WB and the ministries of agriculture-rural development, natural resources-environment and planning-investment on the prosperity and climate change adaptation of the Mekong Delta reported that the steps taken over the past years have not helped cushion the impact of climate change in that particular region,

especially agriculture and lives of local people.

Reports at the forum showed that the delta accounts for half of the nation's total rice output and 70% of aquatic products. However, changes caused by nature and humans have affected the region's growth, according to the [Government website](#). People in the delta's coastal areas are facing a host of challenges given climate change, rising sea levels and storms which are forecast to worsen.

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc was quoted as saying that the fall in farm output

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in the delta would not only affect Vietnam but also elsewhere in the world. Many local people are still leading a tough life, Phuc noted. Besides strengthening dike systems and reservoirs to deal with unexpected effects of climate change, the delta will need to promptly restructure agriculture, find ways to store and save water, and apply high technology in agricultural production.

The Kianh Foundation



The Kianh Foundation is a grass-roots UK-registered charity founded in 2001 to address the desperate need for improved care and

development for children with disability living around the Hoi An area of Central Vietnam.

Dien Ban District has over 1,000 children with disabilities and special needs, including Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Autism, Microcephalus and intellectual impairment. There are barely any support services available. It has been suggested



that there is a link between the use of dioxins, such as Agent Orange, used during the Vietnam War and the level of disability that is still occurring. The consequences of these disabilities can be catastrophic to individuals and their families.



Dianne Ryan is an experienced special education teacher and is employed as an Autism Teacher Coach for schools in the North Western Region of Victoria. She is passionate about the education of children with additional learning needs and in particular, improving the outcomes for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. After learn about the school through the [Kianh Foundation](#)

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Dianne first visited the school for a tour in April 2014 whilst on holidays in Vietnam and was able to meet Jackie Wrafter, the Co-founder and Director, as well as some of the children and staff, re-affirming her passion to continue to be involved.

Dianne and a fellow autism coach attended the school in Hoi An in January of this year, and wrote this report.

VOLUNTEERING AT THE KIANH FOUNDATION



I was fortunate to experience two wonderful weeks at the Kianh Foundation, a school for children with disabilities just outside Hoi An. My colleague and I (both Autism Coaches for the Department of Education) volunteered our services to the staff at the school, with particular emphasis on up-skilling the teachers in the area of Autism.

We spent a great deal of time working with the teachers discussing the common characteristics and learning styles of children with Autism. We were able to use many of our resources from Melbourne that had already been translated into Vietnamese. We were also able to model best practice teaching for students with Autism by using an interpreter to deliver our instructions, and enable the class teachers to understand the theory behind what we were demonstrating.

The staff and children were all eager to learn and try new ideas, which made our task very rewarding and we were able to see some subtle changes over the two weeks. I believe we also gained a great deal from the experience such as improving our understanding of the Vietnamese culture, the school systems and the impact of disability in a country not so well resourced like Australia. We will definitely be keeping in touch with the school and considering other ways we can continue to support the important work they do across central Vietnam.



Changing Paradigm in VN Healthcare

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Health services in Viet Nam are under enormous pressure due to a growing economy and an expanding consumer class, and is therefore presenting opportunities in a sector previously closed to foreign investment.

Compared to its ASEAN counterparts, Viet Nam's health care system is able to provide relatively high quality services at a competitive cost. Although one of the regional bloc's poorest members, infant mortality and life expectancy within Viet Nam are relatively low. Not only has private health care expenditure risen faster than all other major ASEAN states in recent years, the nations spending as a portion of GDP has also grown.

However it is estimated that nearly 40,000 Vietnamese citizens travel abroad for medical treatment, taking with them over one billion dollars in revenue. Many regional medical practices have taken to setting up representative offices within Viet Nam as a means of coordinating the logistics of their patients travel. While this provides a short term solution to the demand, a more lasting solution is needed.

Consequently, reforms have seen the foreign ownership cap for businesses providing health related services raised to 70%. Furthermore, Viet Nam has made special arrangements to allow for the fast tracking of work visas for qualified medical professionals entering the country. Health care in Viet

With ownership caps lifted on medical facilities, foreign enterprises will be permitted to enter into joint ventures with minority shareholders within the country and in staffing these facilities, bridge local talent deficits through the recruitment of foreign practitioners.

New Members

We wish to welcome the following new members:

- Dr Nga Lam
 - Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (Organisational member)
-

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Become a member of the Australia Vietnam Friendship Society

Australia Vietnam Friendship Society (AVFS)

[Download the Membership Application form here](#)



By becoming a member of the AVFS, you will be able to learn about, and participate in our activities, and vote at the annual national convention. Most importantly though, you will be helping us to achieve our goals, and to improve the relations between the people of Australia and the people of Viet Nam.

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