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AVFS Newsletter

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Vietnam Today

Newsletter of the Australia-Vietnam Friendship Society

Message from the President



Welcome everyone to 2017, I trust you had a safe and happy festive break with family and friends. Also a special **Chúc mừng năm mới** to all of our Vietnamese friends in Viet Nam, as well as here in Australia.

This newsletter has some interesting articles, 2 of which are from Michael Redding, and his ongoing relationship with people doing good work in Viet Nam. There is also some information about their renewable energy program, as well as an update on trade and the partnership between Australia and Vietnam. 2017 will be a very interesting year globally, particularly as we witness an unpredictable US presidency, fallout from Brexit and the unsettling feeling of déjà vu in other parts of Europe, and closer to home, developments in the South China Sea. Regardless of the machinations of the rest of the world, our mission **to build strong and lasting friendships between the people of Australia and the people of Vietnam** remains unchallenged!

Yours sincerely

Kim Sampson, President, AVFS

Vietnamese New Year



Tet Nguyen Dan, or Tet for short, is considered the biggest and most popular festival of the year in Viet Nam. Celebrated on the first day of the first month in Lunar Calendar, Tet's celebration is the Vietnamese' longest holiday. In 2017, Tet is on January 28th.

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Tet is the occasion for Vietnamese to express their respect and remembrance for their ancestors as well as welcoming the New Year with their families. Historically, Tet was essential as it provided one of few long breaks during the agricultural year, which was held between the harvesting of the crops and the sowing of the next ones. Families get together to have big meals, decorate Tet trees and eat Tet food, and welcome the new year.

November 2016 National Conference



The 2016 National Conference was held in Melbourne on Saturday November 5. There was good attendance, with Rachel Bui as a special guest, along with her colleagues Lynx and Anthy from the Australia Vietnam Young Leaders Dialogue.

After the usual business of accepting reports from the sitting officers and the financial statements, elections for the next committee members took place.

The newly elected National Executive is as follows:

Kim Sampson – President
 Paul Noack – Vice President
 Kim Pham – Secretary
 Jackie Thompson – Treasurer
 Ron Hall – Ordinary Member
 Bev Hall- Ordinary Member
 Andy Nguyen – Ordinary Member
 Nga Lam – Ordinary Member

Susanne Sperber has retired from the committee, and there was a note of thanks for her contribution to the AVFS. Susanne remains a willing member.

Michael Redding and Bob Britton were apologies at the meeting, and were therefore not able to stand for re-election. We hope to see them at the next national conference ready to stand once again.

Dien Ban Centre for the Development of Children

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with Special Needs



by Michael Redding

On Oct 24th Dung and I arrived in Hoi An (4 hours on the bus south from Hue) to spend 3 days in this wonderful town – we visited the Ancient Town and the nearby My Son Sanctuary with its Cham Civilisation monuments (both are UNESCO World Heritage listed).

However, for me the most important purpose was to have 2 meetings with Jackie Wrafter, the Director and Founder of this unique Dien Ban Centre (quite close to Hoi An). Jackie is an amazing English woman who came on a holiday to VN and then worked in a Hoi An orphanage for 10 years, where most of the children had been abandoned by their parents, due to various disabilities they had been born with.

She became very disillusioned with the poor treatment of the children, so in 2010 went off on her own and set up the Dien Ban Centre for the Development of Children with Special Needs. As part of this she has established the Kianh Foundation, which is based in the UK and which raises money for her Centre at Dien Ban. There are 90 children and about 15 VN staff, most of whom have been given training by volunteer physiotherapists and O/T's from the UK and Australia. Rotary Australia has already sent a large number of Wheelchairs For Kids to this Centre.

I talked with Jackie about my interest in preparing a Funding Presentation to seek donors for the Stage 2 development of the Dien Ban Centre – at a cost of US\$250,000.

Gift of a Tricycle Wheelchair to Coi

by Michael Redding



Two Rotary Clubs in Melbourne have donated money to the NTCM Charity in HCMC for the purchase of 5 Kien Tuon Tricycle Wheelchairs. A key person in NTCM is my friend Anh, and on Nov 2nd he arranged to have the first of these wheelchairs delivered to Coi (16), who has severe impairments in his legs which developed from 4 years of age. Coi and his brother Loc (18) live with their foster mother Mai Tram (39), who is also disabled, but who can earn an income from sewing and selling lottery tickets. NTCM supports this foster care placement, as the boy's parents cannot look after them, being very poor and living a long distance away.

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...s new wheelchair arrived and we watched him walk to it with some anxiety.

However, once he was seated in it he quickly learnt out how to propel it by pushing the steering wheel column back and forwards. With his new mobility other possibilities are open for him, rather than having to spend most of his time just sitting at home. Now he can travel to school, visit other places or even get an income by selling lottery tickets.

Building a Renewable Energy Market



The rapid industrialization of Viet Nam has meant energy consumption has increased dramatically, with growth levels running at approximately 12 percent per year from 2006 to 2015. Almost all Vietnamese now receive electricity at home, with the last of the rural villages expected to come on line by 2020.

The government has now placed a stronger emphasis on renewable energy and the liberalisation of the market. The 2030 target for coal production has been cut by approximately 30 percent, where as renewable energy – generated by solar technology in particular – will play a much larger role.

Hydropower remains the most popular alternative, but in the coming years, solar, wind and bioenergy are likely to establish themselves as new energy sources in Viet Nam. Together, they accounted for only one percent of total production in 2014. By 2030, this is expected to grow to over 10 percent.

To boost competitiveness, the government is privatizing its three main electricity-generating companies, Electricity of Vietnam (EVN), PetroViet Nam and Vinacomin. The equitisation of these firms is estimated to be complete by 2018, thereby opening the retail power market to private investors.

Viet Nam has one of the highest annual hours of sunshine globally - approximately 2,000 to 2,500. The potential for solar energy production is therefore very high, with hopes to produce 12GW of solar energy annually. As a result, the country is now preparing itself for large investments in the solar energy sector, with solar energy accounting for 3.3 percent of total energy production by 2030. Private investors, both domestic and international, are keeping a close eye on these developments, with the country poised to receive large sums of investments in solar energy production.

Viet Nam's long coastline also provides a lot of potential for wind energy. By 2030,

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the government aims to produce 100% of electricity from solar and wind combined, compared to virtually nothing today. With the privatization of state-owned enterprises such as the Viet Nam Electricity Group (EVN), the electricity market is set to become open and competitive.

Viet Nam to Start E-Visa Services from 2017

e-Visa



The Viet Nam National Assembly has approved a resolution to offer electronic visas from February 1, 2017, for a trial period of two years. As per the new scheme, foreign tourists can apply online for a single entry, 30 day visa by

paying a non-refundable fee. Currently, the Vietnamese government is finalizing nations eligible for the scheme.

Viet Nam, at present, has a visa-free policy for ASEAN countries along with Japan, South Korea, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. In 2015, Viet Nam attracted almost eight million tourists with China, South Korea and Japan leading among the visiting countries. The e-visa facility will ease the process for tourists and provide the local immigration control over entry as well. Funds collected from the scheme will also allow for subsidizing the tourism promotion program. Viet Nam aims to attract revenue of US\$18 billion to US\$19 billion and around 10 million foreign tourists each year by 2020.

The Australia - Viet Nam Partnership



Australia and Viet Nam's partnership extends across political, security, economic and people-to-people activities.

- In 2016-17, the Australian Government is to provide an estimated \$83.6 million in total aid to Viet Nam.
- Australians born in Viet Nam represent the fifth largest migrant community in Australia.
- Around 24,000 Vietnamese students enroll in education institutions in Australia each year.
- Viet Nam is one of Australia's fastest growing trade partners, and is central to

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Regional security in South East Asia.

Australia's Trade with Viet Nam:

Two-way goods trading between Australia and Viet Nam in the first ten months of 2016 reached AUD 7.53 billion. This comprised of Viet Nam exporting to Australia AUD 4.12 billion, while importing AUD 3.41 billion from Australia.

Viet Nam's Socio-economic challenges:

- Inequality is a continuing challenge with 15 million people living below the national poverty line.
- Gender disparities still exist, with Viet Nam one of few countries in which the gender pay gap has widened over the last decade.
- Ethnic minorities have still not benefitted equally from economic growth – although they comprise just 15 per cent of the population, they account for around half of those living in poverty.

Viet Nam's Socio Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) 2011-20 provides the country's overarching policy for responding to these challenges. It sets three high priorities:

1. Improving market institutions
2. Promoting human resources
3. Infrastructure development – highlighting the need for a combination of structural reforms, macroeconomic stability, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

Australia's commitment:

Australia's commitment to development cooperation with Viet Nam is ongoing. Reflecting the maturing economic partnership, Australia will continue to leverage Viet Nam's significant domestic resources and foreign investment, and support Viet Nam's efforts to enter a new phase of economic development. By helping to stimulate the private sector, upskill the workforce, and support inclusive growth, Australia will contribute to achieving shared, overarching goal of promoting prosperity and reducing poverty in Viet Nam.

2017 Scheduled Meetings

The committee meetings are scheduled for the 1st Wednesday of February, May, August and November. However it was noted that the February 1st meeting was not possible, so the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 3rd May 2017. In addition, the 2017 National Conference will be held in Adelaide on Saturday 4th November:

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Wednesday 31st May 2017

- Wednesday 2nd August 2017
- Saturday 4th November 2017 (Adelaide)

Please put these dates in your diary!

New Members

We wish to welcome John Drinkwater as a new member.

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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