



Australian T.O.S. Links

April 2007

Writing our first national TOS newsletter for 2007 has made me aware of just how quickly the first quarter of the year has flown past. Hopefully, it has seen all of us being able to progress the plans we made at our Annual General meetings and first TOS meetings of the new year. I have a number of activities on which to report to you and initiatives that you are invited to participate in throughout the year.

In this newsletter I continue the practice of focusing on a service area — this time on the environment. The August newsletter will report on the International TOS Conference in Chicago and its outcomes. The third newsletter for this year will focus on the service area of healing.

Caring for our environment

The theosophical world view sees all life as interconnected and sustained by the Universal Energy. We are all part of the ecological system of our planet, Earth. Each and every one of us therefore has a responsibility to help preserve the ecological balance.

In Australia we are currently faced by a number of environmental challenges related to land use, our river systems, drought and changing weather patterns. The latter is becoming recognised as a world-wide problem to the extent that NASA's ace climate modeller, Jim Hansen, was reported in *New Scientist*, December 2006, as warning that we probably have less than a decade to avoid catastrophic and irreversible climate change.

One million species worldwide are facing extinction due to climate change. And it is predicted that more than 95% of the Great Barrier Reef will have been destroyed by 2050 if carbon dioxide emissions are not reduced. (WWF, Autumn 2007)

According to WWF, "the use of electricity accounts for 69% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions

Our focus service area:

Environment

What's in this newsletter

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which clog the atmosphere, heat up the earth and threaten wildlife and essential natural resources like fresh water."

So the greatest impact we can make on our physical environment is to reduce our energy usage. Later in this newsletter you'll find ideas for simple everyday actions that can make a real difference to our physical environment.

Convention 2007

Reconciliation and its contribution to peace was the topic of the convention session organised by the TOS. We had three excellent speakers: Dr Keith Suter, a foremost consultant on economic and environmental matters; Mr Shan Ali, of the Nobel Peace Prize winning Grameen Bank; and Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio. A common thread running through

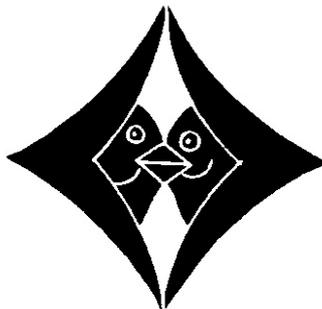
their talks was that peace-building requires an holistic approach that incorporates conflict resolution, takes action on social justice issues and is characterised by compassion.

Congratulations and thanks go to the Sydney TOS Group, and in particular Celia Novy and Betty Ollings, for organising this splendid session.

Conference attendees very much appreciated the stimulating and thought-provoking presentations that wove together information, stories and insights into people's lives and beliefs.

A CD-ROM of the session is being provided to each TOS Group and is available to national members by contacting me at the address at the end of the newsletter. Groups also have a copy of a CD-ROM provided by the Grameen Bank.

The Annual General Meeting of the T.O.S. in Australia was well attended and as usual provided an ideal opportunity for sharing ideas through the reports from T.O.S. groups throughout the country. My annual report is available through the President or coordinator of your local TOS Group.



Focus of national activities in 2007

The AGM also enabled TOS members from around the country to discuss national projects and operations. It was decided to have two major national projects in 2007:

- Continuing the financial support for the TS orphanage in Brazil; and
- Raising multiples of \$1000 to establish and run 'home schools' in Pakistan for children who would otherwise not have access to literacy teaching.

The orphanage in Brazil

The Theosophical Society runs the orphanage on the outskirts of Brasilia and it continues to be in need of funds to continue its operation. The orphanage cares for 20 children from very poor backgrounds. Children come by referral from the Children's Court as a result of having been abandoned or removed from their parents because of abuse. The orphanage is run by volunteers and paid staff.

Throughout 2006, Mrs Zeneida Cereja da Silva kept in touch about developments and the progress of the children. She writes to our TOS family in Australia, "Our warm THANK YOU for your kind and generous donation... I can guarantee that the money will be carefully spent.... To look after orphans, to give them shelter, a home and above all a future is primarily being taken care of by small organisations in Brazil, who often have to struggle to survive. Your contribution will make it possible to continue doing our necessary work for some time to come and I cannot thank you enough for your great deed"

Thank you, Australia!



Home schools in Pakistan

Fareeda and Aman Amir, the Secretary and Treasurer of the TOS in Pakistan, addressed AGM participants about the 'home school' initiative operating in Karachi.

This Literacy Program enables children, young girls and women who have had no opportunity to pursue even a basic education, to attend classes. Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught by a teacher who holds classes at her

own house which is in the same locality as the students. The TOS provides teaching materials, a fan, water cooler, sitting rugs and a small salary to the teacher.

For details, visit www.tospakistan.com



Electronic coloured posters about these National TOS projects are available to publicise them to TS and TOS members and friends.

- Each local TOS Group is being asked to nominate a member to participate in a national executive group. This group will meet by email to work on national initiatives and enhance national communication and discussion.
- The national newsletter will continue to be used as a major vehicle for sharing ideas between T.O.S. groups. It will be available by email to T.O.S. members across Australia. You can register to receive your email copy by contacting cdharrod@bigpond.net.au

Thanks for donations to crisis appeals in 2006

Thanks to all who helped with donations to the crisis appeals for the Pakistan earthquake, the Yogyakarta earthquake and the rehabilitation work following the Chennai tsunami. These appeals have been finalised and our donations put to very good use. We sent \$1730 to the Pakistan appeal, \$4220 to Yogyakarta and \$24,815 over two years to Chennai.

International T.O.S. conference, 27 – 30 July, 2007

The International TOS Conference in Wheaton, Illinois, is only three months away. The conference theme is *Exploring our potential for service*. As the theme suggests, the focus of the convention will be on sharing and developing ideas for strengthening the profile and work of the TOS both locally and internationally, including honing participants' skills in developing service projects. The draft program and registration form are available on the TOS in Australia's webpage. It is not too late to register and join fellow TOS workers in this stimulating experience.



Chicago is renowned for its arts

All TOS Conference attendees are cordially invited to participate in the Summer School and Convention of the TS in America immediately preceding the Conference, from 20 to 27 July. The Summer School theme will centre around Col. Olcott's 100th death anniversary and his contributions to the world.

Our Australian TOS web-pages

Our TOS in Australia web-pages went live in March 2007, thanks to the hard work of the webmaster, Geoffrey Harrod and the generosity of the Theosophical Society in Australia which is hosting our web-pages on its website.

This National TOS web presence will enable local groups to promote their activities to their communities. The web-pages can be updated on a weekly basis so that information remains current.

Check out our site at www.austheos.org.au/tos/ You'll find information on the TOS and its history; pages on our five major areas of service; and contacts for local and international groups. As 2007 progresses, we hope that every local group will add its own page of specific information. We would welcome comments and suggestions by emailing: cdharrod@bigpond.net.au

Sharing ideas about actions we can take to care for our planet

Al Gore's top ten tips for helping stop global warming

Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, ends with the following simple changes that each of us could make in our lives.

1. Change a light

Replacing six regular light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs will save 400kg of carbon dioxide a year.

2. Drive less

Walk, bike, carpool or take public transport more often. You'll save 1.5kg of carbon dioxide for every 5km you don't drive!

3. Recycle more

You can save 1,000kg of carbon dioxide per year by recycling just half of your household waste.

4. Check your tyres

Keeping your tyres inflated properly can improve your car's fuel efficiency. Every litre of petrol saved keeps 2.5kg of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere!

5. Use less hot water

It takes a lot of energy to heat water - use less hot water by installing an energy efficient triple A rated showerhead (3 tonnes of carbon dioxide saved per year) and washing your clothes in cold or warm water (225kg saved per year).

6. Avoid products with a lot of packaging

You can save 545kg of carbon dioxide if you cut down your garbage by 10%.

7. Move your thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and up 2 degrees in summer

You could save about 900kg of carbon dioxide a year with this simple adjustment.

8. Plant a tree

A single tree will absorb one tonne of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.

9. Turn off electrical devices

Simply turning off your television, DVD player, microwave, stereo and computer when you're not using them will save you thousands of kilograms of carbon dioxide a year.

In Australia it's estimated that we'd save 5% of our electricity bills if we stopped leaving appliances on standby.

10. Be a part of the solution

Act now. Don't wait until the majority of other people are doing something positive.

Other tips to save power and decrease carbon dioxide production

- Use a clothes line rather than a dryer (save 260kg of carbon dioxide per quarter as well as money on your energy bill).
- Drive smoothly with the flow of traffic (save 140kg of carbon dioxide per quarter).
- Boil water for hot drinks during the day and fill a thermos flask instead of frequently boiling more water.
- If you don't have it, install insulation. It makes your house cooler in summer and warmer in winter and can save around \$300 in energy costs annually.
- Switch to green power as far as possible. In Australia, 250 million tonnes of carbon dioxide is pumped annually into the atmosphere by coal-fired electricity stations.
- Check out the website: <http://wwf.org.au/publications/green-electricity-watch-2006-summary> for a summary of Green Electricity Watch 2006, sponsored by WWF and ACF. It provides a simple guide to all the green power products available. It also provides information on which ones make a real difference in reducing global warming.
- Use alternative energy sources. Participate in a green energy scheme. Water heating uses about 30% of household energy use so look for green alternatives such as solar energy and heat pumps.

- Join with advocacy groups to lobby State and Federal Governments to stop cutting down Australian native forests. There is little point in funding Asian governments to plant trees to offset Australian carbon dioxide emissions when Australian native forests continue to be clear-felled.
- Write to your politicians and newspapers about actions needed. Also write to compliment them on sensible initiatives. Refer to the September and December newsletters of 2006 for tips on writing advocacy letters. If you can't find your copy, the newsletters are on the Australian TOS website.

Actions to save water

- Reduce your power usage. Coal-fired power stations use large quantities of water (20million litres a day for 1 black-coal power station) Switching to nuclear power does not help because these power stations also use considerable water for cooling. Indeed, nuclear power plants use up to 80% more water than conventional power stations. In addition, uranium extraction uses large quantities of water e.g. the uranium mine at Roxby Downs takes 33 million litres a day from the Great Artesian Basin. Refining uranium for use in nuclear power stations also requires power, which in turn uses water as well as generating carbon dioxide.
- Mulch your garden and water in the late afternoon or evening to save water loss from evaporation.
- Fix dripping taps. A drip can waste over 20,000 litres of water per year.
- Install dual-flush toilets where possible to save around 18,000 litres a year.
- Put in AAA rated shower heads and use 7 to 9 litres of water per minute instead of 15 to 30 litres per minute. It also saves energy costs in heating the extra water.
- Have shorter showers.
- Use aerating taps in the kitchen and laundry. They cut water flow by 50% without reducing water pressure.
- Use environmentally friendly detergents and recycle your laundry and bathroom water on to your garden.
- Use a basin for rinsing vegetables and salads in the kitchen. Then recycle the water on to your pot plants. This can save up to 15 litres a day as well as providing water for your plants.
- Harvest rainwater from your roof into a tank.



- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth and soaping your hands. This can save around 16 litres a day.
- Install a pool cover to save around 100 litres a day.

Actions to conserve bio-diversity

- Support the purchasing of parcels of land in unique and varied environments to preserve or regenerate the local flora and fauna and protect them from introduced species.
- Help protect our wetlands that face significant threats from land clearing, drought and intensive agriculture. Wetlands provide protection to our coasts against pollution and sediments from intensive agriculture. They are the nursery for many fish and crustaceans as well as a feeding and nesting ground for many local bird species. They play a vital role in the life-cycle of many migratory bird species. Write to your local council, State and Federal Governments to let them know that healthy wetlands are crucial to both wildlife and communities and need to be protected in planning processes.

Check out the climate change page at www.wwf.org.au for more ideas on how to reduce your energy usage. Download a copy of the ACF's Green Home Guide from their website at www.acfonline.org.au

Donations

Donations to the National Projects and other activities of international T.O.S. groups can be made through the Theosophical Order of Service in Australia, with cheques sent to my address at the end of the newsletter.

A thought to share

The anthropologist, Margaret Mead once said, ***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.***

Contact

If you have a friend who would like to receive this newsletter by email, please encourage them to contact me. Email copies are free. Please contact me by email at cdharrod@bigpond.net.au or by mail at Ms C Harrod, 26 Lytham Street, Indooroopilly Q4068.

I look forward to hearing from you.

***Yours in service
Carolyn***