



## Australian T.O.S. Links

April 2009

Last year we celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the TOS. Through our numerous events we shared the history of our organisation and promoted its many and varied service activities here in Australia and around the world.

It was an opportunity for us to not only look back on our achievements but to also recognise and celebrate the fact that we are part of a growing international group of TOS members dedicated to putting Theosophy into action. While we focus day to day on the work being carried out in our own communities, we also know that we are part of an international network of ordinary people whose strength comes from their shared commitment to the essential Oneness of all life.

### **A thought to focus our service in 2009**

As we work towards our shared goals throughout 2009, may we be guided by these words from our founder, Dr Annie Besant:

*The spiritual man must lead a higher life than the life of altruism. He must lead the life of self-identification with all that lives and moves. There is no 'other' in this world; we are all one. Each is a separate form, but one Spirit moves and lives in all.*

### **Convention 2009**

Once again we had an excellent TOS session at the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Australia in January 2009 when members of the Perth TOS group presented a panel session on *Transformation in Society*.



### **Our focus service area: World Peace**

#### **What's in this newsletter**

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In the photograph we see panel members Bheena Sewnarain (on left), Rhonda Phillips (on right) and George Wester (in front) with Carolyn Harrod who chaired the session.

Bheena spoke about her work with the successful Alternatives to Violence program that is offered in prisons and community centres, while Rhonda shared stories from her professional work with a religious order. George concluded the session by talking about examples from his Theosophical and professional work that have the potential to transform society.

Congratulations and thanks go to our panel speakers and the Perth

TOS Group for organising this excellent session. Conference attendees found it most interesting to learn about how altruistic service is transforming lives and social attitudes.

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 below.

The Annual General Meeting of the TOS in Australia was well attended and as usual provided an ideal opportunity for planning for 2009 and for sharing ideas through the reports from TOS groups throughout the country. My annual report and minutes of the meeting have been sent to your local TOS Group.

Janice Scarabottolo, of the Canberra Group, is National Treasurer and Lynette Muller, of the Brisbane Group, is National Secretary. A vote of appreciation was given to Edward Sinclair for his dedicated contribution as our National Treasurer over many years.

Each local TOS Group is again invited to nominate a member to be their representative on the National Council. This group meets by email to work on national initiatives and enhance national communication and discussion.

### **National TOS contact details in 2009**

#### **Contact for donations**

Ms Janice Scarabottolo  
National TOS Treasurer  
PO Box 7418  
FISHER ACT 2611

Please send donations to the National Projects and other activities of international TOS groups to the National Treasurer. By amalgamating our donations into one or two electronic funds transfers a year to each international project, we can save several hundred

dollars annually. Each individual or group donor is recognised in the email we send to the international project group confirming the funds transfer. Please make cheques out to the Theosophical Order of Service in Australia.

#### Contact for newsletter

Ms Carolyn Harrod  
26 Lytham Street  
INDOOROPILLY QLD 4068  
tos.australia@gmail.com

**You are invited to send news items, photographs, ideas and comments that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. I would welcome your contributions to our national newsletter.**

#### Focus of national activities in 2009

This year we have three major tasks that we aim to complete, all of which will support the work of local groups. Your group will have input through your National Council member.

- Completion of the revision of the brochure on the work of the TOS in Australia. This activity began last year and we are looking forward to publishing the revised brochure by the middle of this year.
- Completion of the revision of our National Constitution. This work was begun in 2008 and the National Council provided comments on the suggested revisions. Copies of the constitution with annotations of the suggested revisions have recently been sent to all TOS groups. I very much hope that you will contribute to the discussion in your group. If you cannot get to a local TOS group meeting and would like to be involved in this revision process, please contact me by postal mail or email and I will send you a copy of the suggested revisions to the National Constitution.

The timeline for completing the revision this year is:

#### February – August 2009

Input is gathered from local TOS groups and members on the revised Constitution resulting from the National Council's deliberations.

#### August – October 2009

The National Council considers the input from local TOS groups and members and finalises the revised Constitution in readiness to have it voted on at the National TOS AGM.

#### November – December 2009

Notification of changes to the National Constitution go to TOS members.

#### January 1010

Motion at AGM of the TOS in Australia re changes to the National Constitution.

We look forward to having your input into this revision process.

- Redesign of our National TOS website to refresh its appearance and content.

The national newsletter will continue to be used as a major vehicle for sharing ideas between TOS groups. It will be available by email to all TOS & TS members across Australia. To register to receive your email copy, contact: tos.australia@gmail.com

## National projects

At the AGM it was decided to have two major national projects in 2009 to which donations are directed:

- Continuing to fund the running of 'home schools' in Pakistan for children who would otherwise not have access to literacy teaching; and
- Supporting a new project in India, SEE, to help vision impaired people who cannot afford treatment.

#### Literacy home-schools in Pakistan

Our collaboration with the TOS in Pakistan continues to flourish. Fareeda and Aman Amir have been working to ensure that the Pakistan TOS can sustain its educational and social welfare programs in today's difficult political climate. This year we are aiming to support four home-literacy schools. This gives us the challenge for 2009 of raising \$4,800 in donations to send to the Pakistan TOS group to keep these schools operating.



This Literacy Program enables children and young girls 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. A teachers' meeting is held every month. Problems

encountered and suggestions for the improvement of the program are discussed. A representative of the TOS visits the schools regularly in order to monitor their progress. Our donations also contribute to the cost of this on-going professional support for the home-school teacher.

### The SEE Project in India

The SEE (Seeing Eyes for Everyone) Project was launched in 2007 by the TOS in Chennai, India. So far, screening for vision impairment has been carried out in five schools and two slum areas, with approximately 4300 school children and 396 slum dwellers examined. This screening identified 191 school children and 128 slum dwellers whose vision could be corrected with spectacles and these were provided free of charge. Seven slum dwellers were operated on for cataract removal, again at no cost to themselves. More recently, about 75 workers on the Theosophical Society's Adyar Estate were screened as well as a number of orphans from the area.



### How does the SEE Project work?

It is a collaboration between the TOS and the Udhi Eye Hospitals in Chennai, which provides highly subsidised medical care. The TOS in Chennai identifies deserving cases and institutions. Their member-volunteers make the non-medical arrangements and the Udhi Eye Hospitals send professionals to do the screening. If further treatment or glasses are required, the children and adults are sent to the hospital.

Costs are minimal because of the Udhi Hospitals' generosity. The concessional cost for spectacles is Rs 200 (approx. A\$6) and for cataract surgery, RS 1,000 (approx.A\$30) per eye.

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



### International TOS news

Work continues behind the scenes on the International Guidelines for the TOS and the development of resources for members.

The International website is updated approximately every second month with a new article, a featured project and news. When you are looking for focuses for contemplation, you'll find lots to choose from in the beautifully illustrated Inspiration section.

If you or your TOS group have been thinking of supporting the Golden Link School in the Philippines, this is a good year to do so. The Kern Foundation has offered up to US\$20,000 to match donations to the Golden Link School in 2009. You'll find detailed information on the website at: <http://international.theoservice.org>

The International electronic newsletter is also published approximately every two months. If you have not received an emailed copy of *in-touch.online* and would like to be put on the email list, send a blank message to [tos.intouch@gmail.com](mailto:tos.intouch@gmail.com) with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.

### What's new on our Australian TOS web-pages

We have several new postings on our web-pages:

- Link to petitions on human rights
- Links to coming UN days related to our service areas
- Link to Animals Australia *Good News* story
- Link to information about the Kern Foundation's support for the Golden Link School in the Philippines.

Visit our pages at [www.austheos.org.au/tos/](http://www.austheos.org.au/tos/) and you'll find links to this new material in the left hand column.

### Good news stories

Have you ever wondered if there's any point in signing and circulating petitions or making small donations to help particular situations? Well, here's some good news to inspire you to keep voicing your concerns.

Recently WWF-Australia reported on the success of a long campaign supported by petitions and donations to halt the large-scale destruction of Sumatra's forests. All ten provincial governments and four national Indonesian ministries have signed an agreement to protect the remaining forests. Any development project falling outside the principles of eco-based planning will be forever banned.

This decision not only protects the forests but also the orang-utans who live in them. It improves the future for the indigenous communities who suffer increased poverty and disease when their food and medicine sources are destroyed by deforestation. And of course, it decreases the impact of human activity on climate change, because when forests are destroyed, the carbon trapped in trees, their roots and the soils is released into the atmosphere. 20% of the world's greenhouse gases come from forest destruction.

There's also good news from Animals Australia. After being inundated with thousands of emails, the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) has agreed that quick action on baby calf welfare is needed.

## Serving in our communities

When Dr Besant formed the TOS, her intention was that it would provide an avenue through which TS members could apply their theosophical principles within their own communities. She wrote in the March 1908 edition of *The Theosophist*:

*The T.S. Order of Service aims at making Theosophy practical in order that the sum of human misery within and around the areas of every branch of our Society may be visibly diminished. It will seek to model the conceptions arrived at by theosophical study, for their adaptation into useful forms of daily life ... and it offers a common work to all who are willing to act on these principles.*

Many of us in Australia put considerable effort into raising funds for educational and social welfare projects run by TOS groups in Asia, Africa and South America. We do this because we see the vast needs in these countries and want to help alleviate suffering. Our donations definitely help these international TOS groups extend the services they provide in their countries, so this is service work that we need to continue. At the same time, Annie Besant's words challenge us to look more closely at our own communities and to identify opportunities on our own doorsteps for putting Theosophy into action.

### So how might we go about doing this?

- One possible starting point is for your TOS group to talk about each of the service areas that the TOS focuses on – education, social welfare and justice, healing, peace, animal concerns and the environment. Choose an area about which you are collectively interested. Feeling that you really want to make a difference in an area is vital to gaining commitment and to people's willingness to set aside time for action.

If you have two service areas in which different people want to work, then form two action groups. They are not competing with each other so it will often work well to discuss plans for the two areas as an entire group, since this expands the range of ideas generated.

- When you have decided on a focus area, brainstorm issues in your community that are related to that area.
- Identify one or two of these issues about which your group could do something to help. List all your ideas about ways of helping. Now look at your list and underline the ideas that you could realistically put into action given the number of people available and willing to work on this project, the time members can reasonably give to the project, and the amount of funding that you would need to raise. Don't delete ideas from your list, because over time you may find that ideas that were not practicable in the beginning can become achievable.
- Identify potential partnerships with other organisations working on similar focus areas.
- Now comes the exciting part of your planning. Decide which idea/s you are going to begin with. Talk about the things you need to do to put that idea into action. Write down these smaller activities, preferably in the order in which they will

need to be done. Ask for volunteers to do each smaller activity and write their names beside it.

- It is a good idea to ask for a volunteer to coordinate the project. Provide members with a record of what is being done and who is responsible.
- Include your community project on the agenda of each meeting, review progress, discuss ideas to get around problems, promote your project to other TS members and plan further developments. Remember to celebrate your achievements!

There'll be more ideas in our August newsletter. In the meantime, check our website for ideas for using UN Days to focus attention on your service projects.

### Service for our TS community is also on our doorstep



In February 2009 TOS members from Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba got together for a weekend of work to help maintain the National Theosophical Society's Centre at Springbrook. With great energy, the group spruced up the buildings and tidied the surrounding gardens. There were also lots of opportunities for getting to know fellow TOS enthusiasts.

### A thought to share

I came across this beautiful version of the Lord's Prayer, translated from the original Aramaic.

#### *The Prayer to Our Father*

*Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,  
who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.*

*May Your Light be experienced in my utmost holy place.  
Your Heavenly Domain approaches.*

*Let Your Will come true – on earth as in the universe (all  
that vibrate)*

*Give us wisdom for our daily need,  
detach the fetters of faults that bind us, as we let go the  
guilt of others.*

*Let us not be lost in superficial things,  
but let us be freed from that which keeps us from our true  
purpose.*

*From You comes the all-working Will, the lively strength to  
act, the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age  
to age.*

*Sealed in trust, faith and truth.  
(I confirm with my entire being.)*

With best wishes for another year of service,

*Yours in service  
Carolyn*