



Australian T.O.S. Links

December 2009

As I receive the Annual Reports from our TOS Groups around Australia and look back over the year, I am impressed by the variety of interests in our different groups and the range of activities on which they focus. At the same time they share a commitment to action: to giving practical expression to their compassion through service to all life.

This is what our founder, Annie Besant envisaged when she founded the TOS. She did not intend the TOS to be formed of identical groups. Rather, she wanted the TOS to be a vehicle that enabled members of the

Theosophical Society to pursue issues of interest relevant to their communities, with the common thread being an agreement with the motto: 'Towards a union of those who love in the service of all that suffers.'

In this issue of the newsletter, as well as sharing news from within the TOS, we share ideas for service activities in 2010 related to four United Nations Days.

National TOS 2010 AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the National TOS will be held at **2.30 pm on Friday 22 January 2010** at the Australian Maritime College, Launceston, Tasmania. The National President of the TS in Australia, Dara Tatray, has decided that only activities of the Theosophical Society will be included in the TS Convention program. Because the TOS is a separate organisation, although very closely connected with the TS, the TOS AGM is therefore not included on the program printed in the last edition of *Theosophy in Australia*. However, Dara is closing the Convention program at mid-day on Friday 22 January. This will enable the TOS to hold its AGM on Friday afternoon.

One of the major items on the AGM's agenda is **approval of the amendments to the National Constitution**. As you would be aware from previous newsletters, this is the culmination of 18 months of work and consultation. Many thanks go to the National Council members who gathered the feedback and suggestions from their local TOS Groups. Thanks also go to all of you who contributed in your TOS Group.

The National Management Group (Janice Scarabottolo, Lynette Muller and myself) have gone through your input carefully and incorporated it into the revised Constitution. The International Secretary of the TOS, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, has also provided feedback and confirmed that the constitution is compatible with international requirements.

Focusing on selfless service to all life

What's in this newsletter

- National TOS 2010 AGM
- Progress with national activities
- What's new on our Australian TOS web-pages
- Update on our national projects
- National TOS contact details
- International TOS news
- News from around our Australian groups – Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane
- United Nations related activities

Copies of the revised Constitution have been sent in electronic and print form to National Council members for sharing with their TOS Groups. If you would like a personal copy of the revised Constitution, please contact me. My email and postal address are provided later in the newsletter.

Following the AGM in January 2010, the final version of the revised National Constitution will be provided to all TOS members in Australia.

I'm looking forward to chatting with all of you who are coming to the TS Convention or the TOS AGM in Launceston. This is always a good

opportunity for sharing service ideas, strengthening our TOS network and contributing to national planning.

Progress with national activities

New TOS brochure

Copies of the new brochure were sent to all TOS groups in August and I hope that you are finding it useful in promoting the purpose and work of the TOS.

When local groups have confirmed their National Council members for 2010, we will be publishing an updated brochure early in the New Year.

Redesigned TOS website

Our National TOS webmaster, Geoff Harrod, has been working on a redesign of our website with the National Management Group. It will have a modern, uncluttered look and will feature photographs of the various service activities of our Australian TOS Groups.

We are asking for your help to compile as wide a range of photographs as possible. Could you please send me photographs of your group's activities. They can either be sent as electronic images or as printed photographs.

Geoff will be unveiling the new-look website at the National TOS AGM in January.

What's new on our Australian TOS web-pages

We have several new postings on our web-pages related to the United Nations Days featured in this issue. They focus on social welfare, education and the environment.

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

From February 2010, when our redesigned website becomes active, the address will be:

<http://australia.theoservice.org>

Update on our national projects

The SEE Project in India

We have recently had news from Chennai about the impact of our support of the SEE Project. The funds we have provided so far have enabled the Chennai TOS to organise events in three slum areas to screen residents for eye problems. In total, staff from the Udhi Eye Hospitals examined 499 people. Of these, 204 were provided with spectacles and 11 had cataract eye surgery performed.

What a difference, your generosity has made to their lives!!



Literacy home-schools in Pakistan

Thank you for continuing to send donations for the four literacy home-schools in Pakistan supported by the Australian TOS. We will be transferring the next aggregated donation to Pakistan in February 2010, so if you would like to have your donation included in this transfer, please send it to our National Treasurer by early February.

National TOS contact details in 2009/10

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. The newsletter will be published in April, August and December of 2010 .

International TOS news

A small group is currently working on material for a Members Section of the International TOS website. Look out for this addition to the website during the first half of 2010.

If you didn't receive the November issue of the electronic newsletter - *in-touch.online* - and would like to be put on the email list, send a message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line. In this latest issue, our International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin shares her annual report. There are photo-stories of TOS activities in Australia, France, India, Italy and Portugal, invitations to join social and animal welfare campaigns, a short article by Mirabai Bush that challenges us to focus on small acts of service, information on UN Days and an endearing story of cross-species cooperation from the animal kingdom.

The electronic newsletter is published every two months from January and the international website is updated at the same time.

News from around our Australian groups

Melbourne TOS Group

Melbourne TOS members have been active on a number of fronts during the year. In the aftermath of the devastating Victorian bush fires, they rallied support and collected clothes, blankets and children's toys for those affected.

They raised funds for several local animal and social welfare groups as well as making donations to the Golden Link College in the Philippines, the Olcott Memorial School in Adyar and the National TOS projects in India and Pakistan. The Melbourne TS also generously supported these international projects.

One of the social highlights of the year was their annual picnic in the beautiful Melbourne Botanical Gardens. During the picnic, they held a *peace and healing meditation* under the trees and raised awareness of the Australian Conservation Foundation which their TOS group supports.



Several members have been engaged in innovative service work. Tim Falkner chairs a charity, *Know the Odds*, that educates school children about the harmful effects of problem gambling. Michael Ryan contributes a lot of time to the *Men's Shed Network* that provides educational programs, volunteering opportunities and social and recreational activities for older men.

Another member, Gloria Keh, even finds time to volunteer in Singapore. She reports:

Since September 2007, regular sessions on Colour Therapy have been held at the AWWA Community Home for Senior Citizens. Lasting for two hours, each session has been facilitated by TOS member, Gloria Keh.

Participants, averaging around 10 per session, comprise both male and female residents of the Home.

During the sessions, residents work on specific designs on particular themes, dabbling in colours and working on the concept of a 'circle' format, to promote Oneness, and develop one-pointedness. It is indeed a joy to see residents working in focus on their drawings, whilst having a play with colours.

AWWA Home was founded in 1976 to provide sheltered housing for the single elderly. Housed in one of the major suburbs of Singapore, the Home accommodates 136 elderly, whilst providing a friendly environment for self-help and fostering mutual care among its residents.

AWWA Home is part of the Asia Women's Welfare Association that's dedicated to provide "a helping hand" to those in need in the community.



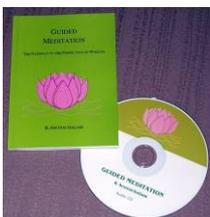
Residents of the AWWA Home in Singapore with their artwork from a colour therapy workshop.

Adelaide TOS Group

Members of the Adelaide TOS Group have been busily collecting books for the Golden Link College run by the TOS in the Philippines. Travis James, the group's Coordinator, reports that the group has collected around 60kg of books so far.

The Golden Link College will be building its library collection for many years to come. The College needs story and information books for primary school aged children, novels and subject area books for secondary students and books for the new teacher education course, so the book donation from Adelaide will be most welcome.

Brisbane TOS Group



A book and CD on Guided Meditation have recently been written and published by Dr. K. Arunachalam. He has taught meditation at the Brisbane TS for many years and is an active member of the TOS.

Aru has generously donated his work to the Brisbane TOS. After paying the printing costs, all profit from sales will go to the National TOS Projects. The set of book and accompanying CD sells for \$12. Copies will be available at the National AGM in Launceston.

The Brisbane TOS supports one of the city's refuges for homeless women. Throughout the year the TOS group provides bags of non-perishable groceries and personal care items for women who are moving from the refuge into long-term housing. The groceries are accompanied by a small recipe book for healthy eating. This gift not only makes each woman feel special but also lessens the financial challenge of the first weeks of independent living.

In the photograph below, Lynette Muller (Brisbane TOS President), Robyn Rizzo (project coordinator) and Tina Fiedler (Vice-president) pack bags to brighten homeless women's lives.



To celebrate the International Day of Peace, the Brisbane TOS conducted a one-day *Peaceful Living Workshop*. The morning session on *Approaches to Meditation* was conducted by the President of the Brisbane TS, Noel Bertelle. Lunch was a social occasion for animated conversations. The practical afternoon session explored ways of *Building Peaceful Relationships*. Although this was intended to be a 'gold coin donation' workshop, many attendees gave generous donations towards the literacy home-schools.



Here we see participants sharing ideas during the 'Peaceful Living' seminar

United Nations related activities

The United Nations shares many of the aspirations of the TOS. It was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

The themes of the following four days relate to our TOS service areas of social welfare and the environment. They could provide ideas for service activities ranging from simply sharing promotional material to initiating a long term project.

February 20 World Day of Social Justice

What are the social justice issues in your community? Do you feel passionate about issues such as child abuse, homelessness in your city or the well-being of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Are there other groups with which you could join to promote awareness of the issues and to explore options for addressing them?

World Day of Social Justice was celebrated for the first time in 2009. It provides an opportunity for all of us to say that a safer, more secure and ultimately more prosperous world is possible, if emphasis is placed on social justice – poverty eradication, promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.



March 8 International Women's Day

International Women's Day is a day of global celebration – an opportunity to recognise the many different contributions that women make to our communities and the progress that has been made in many countries to give women equal rights and opportunities as citizens. There is no room for complacency, however, as women in numerous countries continue to face inequity on many fronts.

The educational sponsorships and literacy home-schools organised by the Pakistan TOS make a real difference to the lives of many women. By providing educational opportunities, these projects help them gain a measure of control over their lives and enable some to escape the cycle of poverty. Our collective donations to support these projects are therefore particularly worthwhile.

The International Women's Day website at <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/> has information on events around the world, articles,

statistics and ideas about equity issues you could promote within your own community.

April 22 Earth Day

The first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970 at the Spring Equinox in March when traditionally the UN Peace Bell is rung at the exact moment of the Equinox. It is a time for remembering that we are one human family and collectively are trustees of the Earth. For the last few years, Earth Day has been celebrated on April 22.

On Earth Day we share ideas for acting as Earth Trustees in our daily lives to help peace, justice and the care of Earth. We commit to making choices in our daily conduct that will foster harmony, lessen pollution, diminish waste and assist nature. For example, we might walk more, use cars less, buy less, grow some of our own food, recycle, plant a tree, etc. We might work with other groups to help to further these goals.

In 2010, the campaign - **A Billion Acts of Green** - celebrates the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day. Organisers hope that a billion people around the world will register their individual carbon reduction acts. This is intended to make a bold statement on climate that governments cannot ignore.

Everyone is invited to start registering their actions on the Earth Day website: <http://www.earthday.net> This website also has information on events, environmental education, a global water campaign, climate change solutions and a program to calculate your ecological footprint.

The Brisbane TOS group has also developed a brochure providing lots of suggestions for personal action to reduce our carbon footprint. You'll find it on our TOS website or write to request a copy.

May 15 International Day of Families

This annual observance was instituted in 1993 to highlight the importance which the international community attaches to families as basic units of society as well as its concern regarding their situation around the world.

The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families as well as to promote appropriate action.

We could celebrate this day by holding an event for our TOS and TS families to celebrate the joys and benefits of family life. It might lead us to adopt a refugee family or to partner with another community organisation that supports refugees. We might decide to use the International Day of Families to promote awareness of a related social problem such as domestic violence and publicise support networks.

You'll find information on events and resources at: www.familiesaustralia.org.au/familiesweek/international.htm and <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/>

A thought to share

The way of unity is love manifested as service.

N. Sri Ram

I wish you peace, harmony and spiritual fulfilment, and a New Year filled with happiness and wonderful experiences.

Carolyn