

Minutes FHC General Meeting 12 February 2025

Meeting opened 6.25pm

Attendees: Som Tamang, Susan Devitt, Peter Gaudron, Jonathan Clayton, Kay Smith, Fiona Sewell, Angus McColl, Annette Musumeci, Josie O'Shea, Sue Lowth, Arjun Paudel, Ivan Whittle, Gwynn MacCarrick, Brendan Radke, Roz Pulley

Apologies: MF de Jourdan, Brian Duncan, Rita Zappulla

Minutes of last meeting accepted – moved Kay/seconded Peter

Susan reported on the major Fundraiser held on 8th Feb 2025

*\$15,000 raised

*\$2700 raised on the raffle alone

*10 new sponsors so these children can now move into the hostel. Peter will now set up those sponsorships - \$60 per month for 9 children & one child sponsored at \$30 per month. Amazing support.

*Jonathan organised so much with the Nepalese restaurant – it would not have happened without him.

*Rita & the Rotary club of Cairns Sunrise also acknowledged for their incredible work

*Angus organised the powerpoint

*Everyone enjoyed the night and people went home knowing more about FHC and what we're trying to achieve. We won't be stopping any time soon.

Som reported on his recent trip to Batase:

Concerns raised over continued longevity of the current committee. Some committee members have been there since the beginning in 2009. Do we need to have some sort of succession plan?

29 students currently in the hostel.

Batase students are involved in dance, volleyball, basketball – trophies won are usually from Batase.

We don't have the same level of funds as compared with before covid. Som believes people's thinking has changed since then.

Continuing problems to attract good staff – teachers, cooks etc. They are paid relatively good money (better than in Kathmandu) but many don't want to work in a remote rural village. We are still looking to fill these positions.

We used to get a lot of enquiries from people, especially university students, to be volunteers in the village. In Cairns, we're not getting the same level of interest from schools. St Andrews is the only one.

One thing we have solved is the trafficking of girls – children are now going to school. Som believes there's no chance traffickers could get children from Batase.

Unfortunately a lot of parents are seeking work overseas, particularly in the Middle East – that means there are less people around willing to work locally. Nepal is now facing a huge crisis with many teachers leaving the country.

In response to Som's update – Roz made some observations. She has been involved from the start. She reminded us that Som used to do everything out of his own pocket which was hugely expensive. Also we've lost key people like Amber, Bijay & Sujana – major blows to the charity. Som & Susan are now very busy with businesses Take on Nepal & Himalayan Dreams and their children – while still running the charity...things always change.

General Business

*Peter Gaudron reported to the meeting how FHC's finances work

Peter showed us a spreadsheet to explain how the payments from FHC to Batase work as we have to be accountable for every dollar.

*Following the success of the fundraiser, Jonathan says we should jump on the back of Rotary to seek further sponsorships/funding.

Finances need to be better sorted out at the next committee meeting – to be put on the agenda that the 3 FHC bank accounts in Australia need to be discussed – do we need to move money from at least one of these accounts into a higher interest rate bearing account? Do we need 3 accounts?

Peter raised the email from Lynn Tan from Singapore. She has expressed interest in supporting FHC. She is keen to establish some sort of partnership and Peter believes it's a good opportunity. To be discussed by the committee.

Next general meeting will be Wednesday April 9th. Supporters to be advised.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm.