

GFVS Annual Report 2022-2023



By Louise Madden, President

I am very happy to present to you tonight the Annual Report for 2022-2023.

This year we have been encouraged by the **visits to VQQ** made at last by different committee members and friends and teachers and students.

- Longstanding committee member **Patrice Hall** has visited VQQ twice this year. She was involved with presentations of 150 kits from Days for Girls to girls in VQQ. Janet Taylor, committee member, was also involved in getting these kits together through the local Soroptimist Club. Patrice tells us that 500 more kits were requested!!!! Patrice was also involved in setting up a Garden Project with local Jamie De Jesus.
- Committee member **Carmel Brown from Clonard College** went to VQQ with school principal, Luci Quinn and Michael McCallum to introduce them to the VQQ connection at Uamori.
- Committee member **Jonathan Chapman from Kardinia International College** took two groups of students, 37 in all, and other staff to VQQ, to visit their sister school and other schools. *“Our itinerary was full, and we were pleased to re-establish the community connection, strengthen the friendship between the Geelong and Viqueque communities and support education in Viqueque while providing an opportunity for the students to develop an appreciation of global issues through personal connection.”*
- Jonathan was also able to put together an MOU with the Timor Leste Ministry of Education, Viqueque district “to develop a science and technology program” in VQQ. He has also established a relationship with the International School in Dili and has been busy organising ordering chemicals et al to be used in the school.
- Committee member, recently retired **Chris Hansen**, has spent quite a few months in VQQ working with the local parish, helping the Days for Girls program, reviving The Twinning Cup which GFVS has continued to sponsor and has been appointed to the Board of VQQ Community Empowerment for 5 years. (See Newsletter September 2023)
- Committee member **Graham Barton from Christian College** visited VQQ with other teachers and has more plans to visit VQQ in November.

The **GVFS Independence Day Dinner** was held on 18th May at the Davison Restaurant. Andrew Mahar AM, consul for Timor-Leste and founder of With one Seed was guest speaker, together with his daughter Alice, founder of the Corner Store. Thanks to the committee members led with great enthusiasm by Patrice Hall, a good time was had by all, money was added to the coffers and awareness of our commitment to VQQ was raised.

Christian College, led by their prefects, held a very successful **Trivia Night** in August, again raising money for Uma Maun Alin (the Friendship House) and inspiring their community re their friendship with the Viqueque community and their work there.

Patrice Hall attended the **Australian East Timor Association Dinner** in May which was part of the Independence Day celebrations – thank you, Patrice.

Committee members, Jonathan, Heather Wallace, and Julie Whelan attended a **meeting with Deakin University**. This was led by Prof. John Toumbourou and discussion was related to future Timor-Leste Partnerships – thank you Jonathan, Heather and Julie.

GVFS members were able to attend the **film “Circle of Silence”** which showcased Shirley Shackleton’s fight for justice and for finding answers to events in Timor involving her husband, Greg and other members of the press all those years ago.

Through **the Scholarship Program** we were able to award 60 scholarships. Thank you to Mariano DaSilva, the GVFS Project coordinator and Chris Hansen who were able to hold a ceremony presenting the scholarships which was attended by the students, parents, school administrators and Education representatives. I would like to draw your attention to the dwindling of support for The Scholarship Program this year. The past two years we have been able to handover 60 scholarships. I don’t think we have enough money for this number, despite emails being sent as reminders a number of times.

The **Twinning Cup** will go ahead in December/January in Viqueque. Originally a project of St Mary’s Parish in Geelong for a soccer competition for under 20s from schools, it has increased in size including hundreds of teams from all over Viqueque. GVFS has contributed to the sponsorship which provides money for footballs, uniforms, trophies, t-shirts, umpires and water.

I would like to thank committee member, Rosemary Nugent, for all the work she did facilitating the **visit of Margie Beck to Geelong**. Rosemary arranged accommodation, transport and catch-ups while Margie visited Iona, Sacred Heart, St Joseph’s and Clonard. Margie worked in Bacau for many years at the Marist Teachers’ College and has recently retired.

Thank you to Patrice Hall and Rosemary Nugent for the informative, stimulating reports which were issued this year via **our newsletter Manten Kontaktu** – a wonderful effort, ladies, especially in following up on email addresses.

I would like to acknowledge Paige Rowan’s work for our committee. Paige is off overseas but promises to return when back.

I would also like to thank the Committee members for their ongoing work over the past 12 months. Obviously, some do more than others for any number of reasons, but we need to remember why we were formed, what are the purposes of our group and how are we going forward with supporting Viqueque financially and through friendship while allowing our friends their greater self-determination. Once again, we have not been overwhelmed with offers of filling vacancies on the Committee which continues to be an annual problem.

I would like to thank David Whelan, our former president for his help and support while moving into this role. A heartfelt thank you to the Executive – Julie Whelan and Bernie Madden – for their continued support and amazing work over the year.
