

August
2006



VLGA

Bulletin

In this issue:

- Walk21 Conference
- Timor-Leste Friendship
- New Communications Strategy
- Women's Health Summit
- Building Communities: A Leadership Journey
- Gambling Licence Review
- State Transport Budget

...and much more.

VLGA in the Philippines



By Rae Perry, VLGA Deputy Chief Executive

The VLGA and Cardno ACIL recently partnered to look at the feasibility of a three year Learning Program for Mayors in Misamis Occidental Province, Philippines. Cardno ACIL is the largest private provider of projects in the Australian overseas aid program.

In June I was invited to scope what that training might look like, what the key elements would be and how we might provide this type of training. I spent two weeks in the Philippines to undertake this study.

Misamis Occidental is small province that has 14 municipalities and 3 cities. This is the setting for the Australian Government funded ACIL program called the Philippines Australia Local Sustainability (PALS) program. The PALS program goal is to work with local governments to "strengthen participatory planning processes and local management of resources (physical, human and financial) for the promotion of improved and sustainable community livelihoods."

Misamis Occidental is one of the poorest Provinces on Mindanao Island. It has enormous pressures of long term poverty and economic hardship. Threats to the environment and threats to personal and community security present a daily struggle.



Workshop with Misamis Occidental Governor Leo Loreto Ocampos (right) and local government representatives

The PALS team work closely with local governments, particularly on planning and resource distribution. The project we are planning is for the VLGA to build on their work by creating and delivering a Leadership and Good Governance Learning Program for the elected representatives in local governments. The Learning Program is to support them to be able to perform their roles as leaders, managers and decision makers better and to provide good governance in all of these

areas. If the project goes ahead, the Learning Program will consist of six 2-week modules over the next 3 years. The Program will be based on the VLGA Training and Learning Principles (see box on Page 2).

These leaders struggle with many of the same dilemmas that local government leaders here do. For example one of the most robust debates we had in a workshop was over who makes decisions. They asked each other "How do local governments devolve some decision making to the community?" And others raised the question, "Aren't we elected to make decisions?"

These are the same questions that I hear local government Councillors discussing at many forums that the VLGA holds. The difference is the context in which the discussion is held, i.e the needs of their communities are enormous. Forty-six percent of families live on less than \$2 per day. There is no safety net if you are out of work and communities fight to rise from poverty.

Continued inside...



From left: Rae Perry with Sister Ester Paredes (Save Nature Society); Welcome banner at Provincial capital; Misamis Occidental Aquamarine Park; Amie Agbayani, PALS Local Government Strengthening Co-ordinator

It is best summed up by one of the Mayors who in a workshop said, "The perennial problem is poverty. Poverty has subverted our democratic way of life. We do not have such a thing as true democracy without first addressing these issues. ... We need to empower people through facilitating raising their standards of living."

The Scoping Report to ACIL is completed and the VLGA hopes to begin the Learning Program later in the year.

Even with all these challenges the Filipinos have to face their hospitality is legendary and my welcome and visit was no exception. I was invited into workplaces and homes with an openness and warmth that was infectious. It was a great pleasure to work in collaboration with the PALS Team and the Mayors. There is a great sense of shared values and vision for what they want to achieve and the part that the VLGA can play in supporting this.

July Leading Edge Forum

Good Health = Good Governance ?

The July Leading Edge Forum tackled the issues of Health and Wellbeing, and the growing place that this dialogue is taking in shaping local government policy and practice.

Cr Beth Davidson, president of the VLGA, introduced the evening through discussing the health continuum, and the challenge of turning the debate from illness to wellness. She highlighted some of the outstanding work being done internationally by the World Health Organisation under the Social Determinants of Health Project, and how health factors effect participation in the community and its governance.

VLGA Training and Learning Principles

- Good governance is the lens through which all of our training content is cast.
- Long term engagement with leaders and communities is needed if real and sustainable change is to be achieved.
- Life long learning and professional development needs to be supported for all.
- The best learning occurs through mutual partnerships and respect between the participants and the trainers. It is important to create and build trust and confidence between trainers and all participants. Therefore a collaborative approach to learning is utilised.
- The VLGA works towards capacity building and skills transfer to local staff over the term of the program.
- Working towards sustainable communities.
- All Programs must have ongoing evaluation and review.

Beth also spoke of her local community in the Surf Coast and how, led by the Mayor Libby Mears, ideas around health and wellbeing were becoming increasingly central to the way the Surf Coast Shire was doing business.

Jared Osborne, Policy Coordinator Community Sustainability at the VLGA, gave the big picture view of how health and wellbeing has developed from a discussion about treating illness, to a way of approaching local government business that takes into account environmental, social, economic and democratic policies.

Jared then covered some of the programs the

VLGA is involved in, including the Food Security Network, funded by VicHealth, which seeks to help local governments to understand how their planning and policy effects food access, and how this access then in turn effects engagement in a whole range of community activities and indicators.

City of Yarra Councillor Kathleen Maltzahn spoke about the Yarra Sexual Violence Project, which seeks to take a proactive community centred approach to sexual violence issues and move from a reactive to a proactive approach. The story of how a violent attack in a park led to some trees and bushes being removed linked the themes in her presentation. Not only are responses like this not strategic in that they do not deal with underlying issues, they often do not address the fear of attack that keeps people from freely participating in their communities.

Kerry Stubbings, Manager of Social Policy and Early Years at Moreland City Council, spoke about the development of the Moreland Municipal Health Plan and the whole of community approach that is the key driver for the development and implementation of policy. Through this approach, the council has developed a greater awareness of the value of integrated approaches to supporting healthy communities which are increasingly being supported by research evidence. The wellness approach has linked in strongly with both 'Triple Bottom Line' considerations and community planning.

Community participation in creating healthy communities is critical, as community participation and good governance is underpinned by good health. The VLGA will continue to work with it's members and partners to develop positive approaches to ensuring healthy people are a central consideration of community and local government business.



From left: Cr Rosemary West, Cr Charles Pick, Alice Aird contribute to the discussion at the July Leading Edge Forum

Local Governments, Activism and Advocacy:

What ? Where ? Why?

3 August VLGA Leading Edge Forum

What is the role of local governments regarding community activism and advocacy? The Forum will examine the role of advocacy by local governments. We want to explore the notions of activism exercised by citizens, groups, candidates and Councillors and how that process changes when embraced through a direct advocacy role that a Council may choose to take up.

Local Governments may advocate on issues that they see as important on behalf of their communities but those campaigns are run under a different social contract than traditional activism. What are the differences? What makes them different?

Particularly important is how a Council chooses to take on an advocacy role, the advice from the CEO, how staff engage with the issue and how this advocacy plays out as a legitimate element of the role of local governments. Still some Councils balk at taking up advocacy roles as it is too hard, too dangerous, not Council's business or best left to the community activists.

Important is the relationship Councils choose to have with activists that support strategic issues in which Councils have a shared interest. Many local governments have sophisticated relationships with community groups that share similar, if not the same, objectives on a range of matters. How is this relationship and its tensions managed and understood?

We have asked two prominent and engaging speakers to set the scene, but we hope to use the forum to have a challenging discussion.

Speakers:

David Risstrom – Barrister and former Melbourne City Councillor

Peter Johnstone - CEO of the City of Boroondara

VLGA President, Beth Davidson will chair the session which will create a lively debate facilitated by Andrew Rowe and Rae Perry.

As usual the meeting starts at 7 pm at the VLGA office. Join us for a bite to eat and a drink from 6 pm (but please do RSVP to the office).

Media and Meetings Reminder

Don't forget our Media and Meetings training day on 10 August. There are still a few places available. The media training by specialists Media Manoeuvres has been highly valued by participants in past years. This year Media Manoeuvres will run two sessions: Media Interview Skills and Effective Media Strategy. To round off the day, VLGA Chief Executive Andrew Rowe will run a session on "How to Make the Most of Meetings". We're also holding a dinner in the evening, to provide an opportunity to relax and reflect on the day's learning. See our website for more details or ring the office to book your place now.

Walk 21 Conference

Get Ready to Take the Next Steps

From the 23rd to the 25th of October 2006, Melbourne is hosting the 7th international Walk21 conference at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre. Walk21 will involve visionary and influential planners, practitioners, politicians and advocates for sustainable, strong and healthy communities where people can and do choose to walk.

Leading speakers and delegates from all over the world and from a diversity of sectors including local government, recreation, community development, urban and transport planning, environmental protection, safety, health, education, tourism, design and business areas will converge on Melbourne for this landmark event.

We believe this event should be of particular interest to local governments and communities. Issues such as community well being, urban design, transport connections, health, recreation, planning, design and community connectedness will all feature in the Key note addresses and sessions.

Over 170 abstracts from potential presenters have been received and leading speakers from fourteen different countries including Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK, Switzerland and Indonesia will present

over 80 papers.

The program will feature over 30 Breakout Sessions, 4 Keynote and Plenary sessions, 3 Panel Discussions, Meet the Experts, Walkshops and a wide range of social events. There are also numerous pre and post conference activities planned.

Registrations are now open via the conference website:

melbournewalk21.com.au

This website will be updated regularly with information so visit often!

Conference themes

Making walking possible:

Design so walking is safe, easy & attractive.

Making the choice:

Promotion of walking in communities.

Making the case: The case for walking, social, environmental and economic.

Making it happen: Influencing and generating commitment partnerships.

Speakers include:

Justin Madden MLC - Minister for Sport and Recreation

The Hon Peter Batchelor - Victorian Minister for Transport

The Hon Tony Abbott - Australian Government Minister for Health and Ageing

Dr Linda Milan - Director, World Health Organisation

Tony Bliss - Lead Road Safety Specialist, World Bank

Lars Gemzoe - Gehl Architects APS - Urban Quality Consultants

Rob Moodie - Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Health Foundation (VicHealth)

Rodney Tolley - Director, Walk21

Walk21 is being convened by Kinect Australia, The VLGA and Walk21 UK and is sponsored by The 'Go

MELBOURNE WALK 21 2006

7th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON WALKING & LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES
OCTOBER 23-25 2006



For Your Life' campaign, Department for Victorian Communities, Department of Infrastructure, Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Human Services. A wide range of organisations is assisting and supporting the event.

Focus on Friendship

Over 100 members of Timor-Leste-Australia Friendship Groups gathered on 8 July to discuss the implications of the recent unrest in Timor-Leste on the development of the Friendship program and how best to respond.

The new Timor-Leste Ambassador, Dr Hernani Coelho da Silva, provided an update on developments in Timor-Leste and Sieneke Martin, Timor-Leste Program Coordinator for Oxfam Australia described the international NGO response to the situation and Rae Perry, Deputy CEO of the VLGA, outlined the VLGA position.

A large part of forum was taken up with discussions by small groups about the short-term and long-term challenges for friendship groups and possible actions they can take. A summary of the outcomes of these discussions is on the VLGA website.

Dr da Silva outlined a range of challenges for the Timor-Leste government and its international supporters arising from the recent unrest. He said Friendship groups, together with other NGOs were important because they could contribute to the process of community reconciliation, as they are seen as politically 'neutral'. The Friendship groups also operate across the whole country, spanning the east and the west.

He expressed optimism about development and job creation in the immediate future, after the 2006-2007 budget is passed which includes a significant amount for capital investment and a priority to stimulate growth in the private sector.

Rae reported that the VLGA Board has renewed its commitment to supporting the local government friendship groups, the Dili Friendship Liaison Office and the proposed Dili Friendship Conference, which was planned for August 2006, and had been



"Focus on Friendship"

Communiqué

8 July 2006

This Communiqué represents the commitment and aspirations of the people who gathered at the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) Forum on 8 July 2006 to "Focus on Friendship" with the people of Timor-Leste.

We show our friendship and solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste and pledge our ongoing support.

We acknowledge that the people of Timor-Leste have had a long journey through adversity and believe that they will again show the same determination and courage that enabled their independence.

We recognise that there will be continuing challenges for these people and their nation, and we offer our support and assistance to work with the Timorese people and their communities to develop the great potential that is Timor-Leste and its people.

Our solidarity with our Timorese partners will ensure that we make the future of Timor-

Leste one marked by co-operation, strength and friendship.

We will work with Timorese people, their leaders and their Government, to ensure that they have the opportunity to thrive and prosper.

Working together we strengthen communities in Australia and Timor-Leste in our joint quest for peace and prosperity.

Authorised by Cr Beth Davidson, VLGA President, 8 July 2006.

postponed due to the recent unrest. The VLGA Timor-Leste Working Group will continue to act as a coordination point for the Friendship groups, while lacking dedicated resources to support this work, which it will continue to seek from the Victorian government.

Rae stressed the importance of Friendship groups preparing themselves to take up the challenges which will arise when the situation in Timor-Leste is more settled, by using the opportunity to strengthen

support from their councils, build their community volunteer base, improve their knowledge of Timor-Leste and increase their fundraising. They could also lobby their State and Federal MPs to provide ongoing/increased assistance to Timor-Leste.

Sieneke Martin alerted the group to the threat of food shortages, particularly in the Districts, where about half of the Internally Displaced Persons are located, as food reserves are depleted, and local villagers begin to use up stocks of seed intended for planting future food crops. She invited Friendship groups to consider ways of supporting their partner communities in the Districts.

For more news from the Friendship Groups, see page 10.

New Communications Strategy

From next month we are changing the way we communicate with our members.

The VLGA Bulletin has traditionally been tied to the monthly meeting, being published the week before. However for many of our members, by the time the Bulletin arrives it is too late to be an effective notice of the meeting. Invitations to meetings will henceforth be distributed by email. The Bulletin will change to a quarterly instead of monthly publication. The Bulletin will continue to bring you news and analysis, updates on VLGA events and actions and commentary on current events, but will concentrate more on in-depth coverage of longer-term issues.

Between Bulletins we will keep you up to date with two new monthly email publications:

- **Members Report:** A one-page printable newsletter, published the week after the monthly VLGA Board meeting. The Members Report will focus on Board decisions and major VLGA initiatives and actions over the month. It will be distributed to all members via email. For Council Delegates, this will replace the current monthly Delegates Report.
- **Monthly Update.** An email, distributed two weeks before the monthly Leading Edge Forum/Strategic Meeting. The Update will give a preview of the coming Forum/Meeting, a rundown of coming events and listing of VLGA Media Releases for the past month.

The VLGA will also strengthen its communications in the following areas:

- **Media Releases.** Over the past year we have raised our media profile by issuing frequent media releases on relevant issues. Our media releases will now be archived on the VLGA website so that members and the general public can see exactly 'where we stand' on current issues.
- **Website.** The VLGA website is currently being upgraded. The new site was being fine-tuned as this Bulletin went to press, and will be launched shortly. The new site has a whole new look, is compatible with a wider range of browsers and will be far better for users with disabilities.
- **Weekly News.** The weekly email News Update continues to gather more subscribers. We will ensure that all our members who wish to received the update are put on the subscription list.
- **Email database.** With increased reliance on email for our communications, it's critical that we have current email addresses for VLGA members. Our office staff have already starting calling members whose email addresses report a 'bounce'. We aim to keep our database of members' email addresses up to date at all times. If you haven't received an email from us for a while or have recently changed your email address, give our office a call and update your details.
- **Print alternative.** For members who do not have access to email, we will send print copies of the monthly publications (Members Report and Monthly Update) by post. If you need this service, please fill in the form at left and return to the VLGA office by post (see back page for address).

**Request for VLGA
Monthly Publications by Post**

I do not have access to email and wish to receive the VLGA monthly publications by post.

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....**PC**.....

Please tick:

Individual member

Group member representative

The VLGA Annual Review will also be affected by our new communications strategy. The Review will continue to report comprehensively once a year on VLGA achievements against the VLGA Strategic Plan. The Review will now be distributed electronically as a PDF file rather than in print. A limited number of print copies will be available for those who need them.

This new strategy takes advantage of the speed, convenience and low cost of electronic communication.

Please contact our Communications Officer, Alan Davies with any questions about the new communications strategy. (Email: alan@vlga.org.au or ring the office.)

State-wide Women's Health Summit

Women Mayors were invited to this invitation only event, held on 13 July 2006 and organised by a coalition of 13 women's health advocacy groups and services, including Women's Health in the North (WHIN) and Royal Women's Hospital. VLGA endorsed the 10 point plan associated with the Summit, along with 30 other community and State-wide organisations, including MAV and a number of individual Councils.

Of the 28 women Mayors in Victoria, 6 were able to meet over breakfast organised by VLGA and City of Darebin, and attend the Summit held at Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre. With the Mayors presence and the interest expressed by a number of other women Mayors unable to attend on the day, we have a potential critical mass to be able to make a difference in the way the health of more than half the community can become core business for local governments.

The challenge to think about how the differences between women and men affect health often brings the response, "Well, what about men's health?" A good question to ask, and consider this:

Violence against women and intimate partner violence in particular accounts for the greatest cause of ill health and death among Victorian women. It beats heart disease, cancer and road

trauma.

Well, what about men's health? If we could prevent this violence, we would automatically improve the health of the entire community – all those directly and indirectly affected by violence against women. This includes women; boys, girls and men.

Mayor Libby Mears addressed the Summit, talking about her Council's role in health at the wellness end of the health spectrum. She described the many opportunities for Council to work with community to create hopes, connections and interventions to improve the health of women and therefore the health of more than half of her municipality. Libby highlighted the three principles of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter as central to the work of creating healthy, well connected communities – gender equity, working with diversity and supporting the active citizenship of women.

VLGA was successful in its intentions underlying support for the Summit. While one major goal of the Summit was to influence the next elected

Government following November State elections, the potential for local governments to work together with women's health services and advocacy groups to improve community health and wellbeing became a bit of a hot topic in the breaks between sessions. The first step to influencing the way forward to more balanced health priorities is having the conversations around



Women Mayors Breakfast

the tables – many of these conversations were seeded on July 13.

Enquiries? Contact Linda Bennett, VLGA Women's Policy Officer at the VLGA office or via email: linda@vlga.org.au.

PIA Luncheon with Jim Betts

Jim Betts, Director of Public Transport at the Department of Infrastructure, will be special guest at a lunch hosted by the Planning Institute of Australia and the VLGA on Thursday the 24th of August. Jim will give an insight into the projects and programs that are taking shape under the *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* statement. For more details, keep an eye on the VLGA News webpage.

Mayors On Bikes 2006

Mayors on Bikes 2006 is nearly upon us! This unique hands-on information and networking event for Mayors and Councillors is a highlight of the local government calendar and is not to be missed. This event is not just for bicycle enthusiasts, but for any Councillor who wants to make the most of this growing and increasingly important form of transport.

Mayors on Bikes is run in partnership with Bicycle Victoria and the host Council as a part of Ride to Work Day. As always there will be plenty of time for discussion and lunch will be provided.

Your Mayoral vehicle to the future awaits!

So mark this date in your diary now: Wednesday 4th October, 9:30am – 12:30pm.

State Transport Budget

Howard Ronaldson, DOI secretary, once again gave an engaging and insightful presentation on the infrastructure implications of the State Budget. Hosted by the City of Latrobe in their new, modern headquarters, Mayor Lisa Price opened the talk to a strong showing of local government representatives and senior regional DOI staff.

Howard focussed on the commitments for rural and regional communities of the *Meeting our Transport Challenges* statement, and was quite open about the challenges and opportunities ahead. With a recurrent expenditure increase of 13%, the Secretary emphasised that with careful planning and the engagement of local governments, a real difference to people's lives would be seen over the next 10 years.

Discussion of the better integration of bus and train service time tables in the near future was greeted with strong interest, as was the apparent change of plans for a train service to Leongatha.

However, while there is still not a clear, overarching strategic framework for rural and regional transport in Victoria, communities outside of Melbourne still do not have a clear idea of when and where

changes are, and are not, going to take place.

One telling slide which showed new bus services did not show any new services for East Gippsland. When questioned on this, the Secretary highlighted 2 new services for the area which had developed from the Provincial Statement and the Transport Connections program.

This one moment really reinforced the need for a development framework which clearly outlines the projects, plans and funding for rural and regional transport. The VLGA will continue to engage with the Secretary on this and other transport issues.

Building Communities: A Leadership Journey



By Linda Bennett, VLGA Women's Policy Officer

This great partnership project, between Dattner Grant, Hobsons Bay City Council, Sustainability Victoria and VLGA, is now half way through. 24 participants, residents and workers of Hobsons Bay, have completed 3 of 5 formal Modules in the 12 month program.

Participants are invited to do leadership differently as a result of the insights gained during the program. Taking up this invitation requires access to



Participants in the Building Communities: A Leadership Journey program

the information and thinking behind various leadership tools. Equally importantly, it requires focussed effort and the courage to try out new ways of operating outside preferred ways.

Broad themes covered so far include community leadership and creating a climate of inclusion; strategic

planning and project scope and sense of self as it relates to leadership. Participants have had access to the most recent and advanced thinking and tools for leadership development. The program creates

ideal opportunities for participants to practice some new mind sets, and different ways of applying the resulting skills. Each learning module offers formal exercises and the project triads which meet between the formal learning blocks allow informal discussion and learning through action. Participants are currently in the exploring and planning phase of small environmental sustainability projects which will allow them to practise the leadership skills developed through the program.

For me in the Project support role, it has been a privilege to be involved in this program. I have been able to see, and in some cases directly experience the insights and responses of individuals to the challenges of the program.

While it is early days in the project as far as formal evaluation goes, feedback from participants so far indicates the remarkable amount of learning and personal insight which is starting to be fed into community leadership roles.

Please contact me at the VLGA office if you have any questions.

Conferences Profile Gambling

The second half of 2006 sees a number of excellent conferences taking place that seek to explore issues associated with gambling. The New Zealand Gambling Foundation is hosting its international conference this year with the theme "Gambling and Its Impacts: Policy, Practice and Research" as its key focus. To be held in conjunction with the Auckland University of Technology from September 13 to 15, prominent New Zealand and Australian researchers and gambling advocates will be presenting. Dr James Doughney from Victoria University will be speaking about "Ethical blindness - EGMs and public policy" and Professor Jan McMillen from ANU on "Assessing the Impacts of Gambling: Research & Policy Influence". To read more about the conference, its programme and attendance details, go to <http://www.pgfnz.co.nz/index.htm>

Immediately following will be the International Pokies Impact Conference (IPIC). Organised by Duty of Care Inc., the conference is scheduled for September 18 & 19 and will be held in Melbourne at Eden on the Park. This year's theme, "Ask the People", will feature a keynote address by well known and long time advocate on gambling issues, the Rev Tim Costello AO. In addition, South Australian 'No Pokies' MP, Nick Xenophon, will discuss 'Real Change' and there will be a range of speakers and workshops from government, community, service provider, activists and problem gamblers. For conference information and registration details go to www.dutyofcare.org.au/ipic

To round out the year, the annual National Association of Gambling Studies (NAGS) is being held in Sydney on November 22 to 25. Its theme for this year is "Gambling: The Future Now" and whilst the programme outline is not yet published, the agenda usually includes presentations from acknowledged researchers, government, community and industry persons with perspectives and commentary on contemporary gambling policy issues. For information about the NAGS conference, go to www.nags.org.au

The Community Advocacy on Gambling project plans to either attend or present at these three conferences as important fora for debate and critical thinking about gambling policy issues. We would encourage anyone from the community or local government sector to consider attending these events as a way of engaging in the various discourses currently taking place on this important social justice issue. On their own, the conferences represent a valuable opportunity to meet and exchange knowledge with others interested in this area. For contact with the Community Advocacy on Gambling project, please call Andrew Manning (Community Advocate on Gambling) or Angela Nicholas (Research and Support Officer) on telephone (03) 9347 3950.

EGM Licensing Review

Written submissions to the state government's Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Licensing Review became available to the public this month on the Department of Justice website.

33 local Councils, 39 community groups and individuals, and 24 industry groups took the opportunity to submit in writing their responses to a series of questions relating to possible changes to the structure and operation of the EGM industry post-2012. In 2012, the EGM operating licenses currently held by Tattersall's and TABCorp will expire, providing an opportunity for major changes to the industry. The Community Advocate on Gambling (CAOG) has created summaries of all community and local government submissions, and a number of industry submissions for the information of the community. These summaries are available in the 'Library>Gambling' section of the VLGA website at www.vlga.org.au/publications/ and have been distributed to community and local government groups who submitted to the review.

The next step in the EGM licensing review process involves a series of panel hearings. Those groups who made written submissions to the review will have the opportunity to state their concerns and recommendations verbally to a panel of three representatives nominated by the Department of

Justice. These hearings will be open to the public and any interested person(s) may attend, though they will be unable to direct questions or comments to the presenters or the panel. At the time of preparing this article, the timetable of hearings and venues was not available but it is expected that it should now be posted on the Department of Justice webpage for the "Gambling Licenses Review". In preparation for the hearings, the advocacy project held a pre-hearing forum on Monday 10 July with 37 community and local government representatives who will be making presentations to the panel. The aim of the forum was to provide information about the hearings process, advice on how these groups can mostly effectively present their arguments to the panel, and as an opportunity for presenters to collaborate and strengthen their arguments and presentations. We will continue providing support to those presenting groups as the dates for the hearings draw closer, beginning in late July and finishing at the end of August.

Requests for information and/or support relating to the EGM licensing review in general, or the panel hearings can be directed to Andrew Manning (Community Advocate on Gambling) or Angela Nicholas (Research and Support Officer) at caog@vlga.org.au, angela@vlga.org.au or by phoning (03) 9347 3950.

Bans on Gaming Venue Signs

In June 2004, the State Government announced it would legislate to ban gaming machine related signage at poker machine venues. The signage ban came into effect on 1 July 2005. However the Government allowed a moratorium period of 12 months grace within which the industry was required to comply with the new legislative provisions.

A Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) was developed, which outlines what is acceptable signage on venues under the new provisions. For reference, a copy of the RIS is now available on the VLGA website at www.vlga.org.au/publications/public/gambling.shtml

The Government did not implement a blanket ban on all forms of gaming machine related signs at venues. Rather, the Victorian regulations provide exemptions to the signage ban. Those specific exemptions allowable are listed in Schedules to the

Regulations (titled "Gambling Regulation (Signage) Regulations 2005).

Notwithstanding the exemptions, the requirements of the ban now have full effect. Essentially, the new provisions only allow **one** fixed external building sign per street frontage and such signs are not to exceed a dimension of two square metres. The allowable sign may only use the corporate logo for each industry participant, that is, for a Tabcorp venue the word "TABARET" and its approved Tabaret symbol and for Tattersall's venues, the "Tatts Pokies" corporate logo.



"Gaming Entry": Is this sign legal?

Further, the regulations allow for car park direction signs and building entrance signs but again there are restrictions on size and placement. The Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR) is charged with the responsibility of ensuring compliance with the new signage regulations and so should there be examples of potential lack of venue compliance in local areas identified, then you are

entitled to refer the matter to the Commission for investigation.

Contacts for the Commission to refer matters on are by email to vcgr.inquiries@vcgr.vic.gov.au or by telephoning 03 9651 3333 and asking for the "Compliance and Investigations" branch. Alternatively, you are welcome to refer matters to the Community Advocacy on Gambling staff who can follow up any matter on your behalf with the Commission. Please call either Andrew Manning or Angela Nicholas at the Community Advocacy on Gambling project on 9347 3950.

Women's Charter Awards

Applications are open for Victorian Local Government Women's Charter Awards and close soon. If you have left your run late, but still wish to be a contender, don't hesitate to contact Linda at VLGA.

Remember that the Awards include a \$500 grant for community groups and a classy designed glass plaque (a work of art in itself) for Councils. Plus the glory of course.

Check the webpage for information and application form. Please inquire with Linda Bennett at the VLGA if you have any questions.

Timor-Leste Friendship Group Activities

1. Friends of Venilale

By Kaaren Smethurst and Will Twycross

Friends of Venilale is now about two years old, and is a Shire of Mansfield sponsored, community run group which operates in close co-operation with the Mansfield Secondary College, which has, as its friendship school, Sao Domingos Savio Junior High School at Bercoli, near Venilale. Venilale is officially regarded as part of Mansfield Shire's "Small Towns Programme".

Our Friendship Agreement was signed last year in Venilale by Sr Julio Tome da Silva, sub-District Administrator and our Mayor, Tom Ingpen. The community put their highest priorities on English in their schools, tourism development and the building of a Women's Centre.

Last year, Pedro Maria da Silva lived in our community and worked in the local Primary and Secondary schools with the object of returning to teach English.

Fov and MSC had two trips to Timor planned this year, one by eight "tourists" as a tourism pilot, one by fifteen teachers and students to Bercoli. Due to the Level 5 Travel Advisory both had to be cancelled. It was decided, however, that a small group (2) should travel to Venilale in a private capacity early June to maintain contact.

We saw a very large refugee camp at Kimore, Dili. The atmosphere was tense but the camp was safe, with road blocks and a strong police and army presence. We left to Bacau by the coast road, which the Mikrolet driver thought "safer" and five hours later were in Venilale.

The visit was very successful, as we found Pedro teaching 54 hours of English a week at four schools, conducted a downscale version of the tourism pilot, made contact and progressed plans with the Womens Group and purchased local handcrafts for sale in our local outlet "Made in Mansfield". Returning to Dili, we went to the Alola Foundation to collect donated sports equipment for the schools and explore examples of value adding to local craft work. With a representative of the Womens Group, Regina da Souza, we managed to find one of two treadle sewing machines that they had been

wanting to purchase. We couldn't buy schoolbooks, as the commercial shops were mostly still closed.

A Level 5 Travel Advisory was in force at the time (Basically "don't go, come back if you are there, and stay indoors"). Despite this, at no stage did we feel under any threat, and the many army and police we spoke to were (privately) very supportive of our presence.

While we were there José Ramos Horta became Prime Minister. In his house compound, there are dozens of UNHCR tents. It struck us that our Prime Minister might consider lessening the suffering of our refugees by pitching a few tents on the lawns of Kirribilli House!

2. Friends of Oecussi

By Bernie Millane

Recently we raised \$3,000 to fund the purchase and installation arrangements for three solar powered lighting units – each to be installed on the external

roof of three Community Houses, identified and prioritised by former Ambassador Jorge TEMA and community leaders attached to the District Administrators office. A cheque will be sent to Bill Bennett and the Alternative Technology Association (Aust.) and plans made for the trip to Dili and Oecussi later this year. Photographs of the

three locations have been requested. The original August 2006 installation plan has been cancelled because of recent issues affecting safety in Dili.

We also raised \$1,500 to enable the purchase and installation of a number of building and construction items, for the Quesi Primary School Restoration Project. I have sought a guarantee regarding the purchase of key materials and payment arrangements. I have also requested, on behalf of donors, photographs of the Quesi Primary School and the completed restoration work.

Men's Referral Service

Male volunteers wanted

No to Violence: the Male Family Violence Prevention Association is seeking applications from men interested in becoming a telephone volunteer in this great community service. The training involves completing Graduate Certificate training from Swinburne University, after which MRS seeks

Weekly News Updates



Keep up with the news between Bulletins with our weekly news email. Just visit our website News page and enter your email address to subscribe. News, events, media releases and updates from the VLGA and associated groups in your email every Friday.

a commitment to 3 hours once a fortnight as a volunteer Telephone Counsellor.

Information available on 94528 3536.

Sowing the Seeds VicHealth Forum

A forum to share the experiences of VicHealth's Food for All program and showcase some of the VicHealth research and projects focused on increasing regular access to nutritious food from non-emergency food sources (food security).

This forum will attract a multidisciplinary audience of councillors, researchers, practitioners, planners, policy makers, food growers and retailers. It will feature presentations from researchers and other experts and will be an opportunity for you to discuss challenges and solutions for the following questions:

- Food supply within the natural, built, social and economic environments. What strategies will work to improve access to a variety of foods in disadvantaged areas?
- Research to practice and practice to research; Are there ways to maximise the collaboration between researchers and practitioners?
- Legislation and policy; what are some of the legislative/policy challenges to improve food access from paddock to plate?
- Community gardening; harnessing the growth of local community and school gardens for fruit and vegetables. What's best practice?

There will also be opportunities to learn about the first year's experiences of the VicHealth funded Food for All projects in nine local government authorities.

A resource kit to assist practitioners and volunteers working to improve food security will also be launched at this forum.

Attendance at the Forum is free of charge and requires registration. See "Coming Events" box for details.

To join the mailing list for this interesting Forum, please email:
sowingseeds@vichealth.vic.gov.au

Coming Events

- ◇ **Metropolitan Transport Forum**
Wednesday 2 August,
6:00 - 8:30pm
Melbourne Town Hall
RSVP mtf@mtf.org.au
- ◇ **Consultation and Engagement Working Group**
Thursday 3 August, 1:00pm – 2:30pm
VLGA office
RSVP jared@vlga.org.au
- ◇ **VLGA Leading Edge Forum**
"Local Governments, Activism and Advocacy: What ? Where ? Why?"
Thursday 3 August, 7:00pm
Refreshments/dinner from 6:00pm
Meeting Room, 60L
60 Leicester St, Carlton
RSVP to the VLGA office
- ◇ **Media and Meetings
VLGA/Media Manoeuvres Training**
Thursday 10 August 10:00am - 4:00pm
See VLGA website for details
- ◇ **PIA Luncheon with Jim Betts**
Thursday 24 August
See VLGA website for details
- ◇ **Sowing the Seeds**
VicHealth Forum
Monday 28 August, 8.30am - 4.30pm
The Drum Theatre, Dandenong Town Hall
RSVP: sowingseeds@vichealth.vic.gov.au
- ◇ **Mayors On Bikes**
Wednesday 4 October
9:30am – 12:30pm
- ◇ **Walk21 Conference**
23-25 October
- ◇ **Dili Friendship Conference**
Postponed until late 2006.
Watch VLGA website for updates.



Victorian Local Governance Association
Suite G06, 60 Leicester St Carlton 3053
Telephone: (03) 9347 2233 Fax: (03) 9347 9933
Email: vlga@vlga.org.au Web: www.vlga.org.au