



**" Your generosity and love are helping us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of Children with Disabilities and their families"**

Dear Friends, Family and Colleagues,

**September 2018 VACD Newsletter**

**We warmly welcome new subscribers to our regular VACD newsletters:**

New subscribers, especially those from my LinkedIn network who have joined us recently and are eager to learn more about our mission for children with disabilities in Sri Lanka, have offered their support and volunteered to partner us on this remarkable journey of compassion can find detailed information about our mission on: <http://www.vacd.org.au/>

It is delightful to note that many of my networking members are active on the LinkedIn platform, posting high quality and insightful articles, engaging, sharing, discussing their views and broadening their perspectives and knowledge in their chosen disciplines. I encourage you to make beneficial use of this great opportunity to extend your own network, enhance your expertise, profile and opportunities.

**Clarion Call for action by the Sri Lankan diaspora and those living in Sri Lanka:**

VACD was solely funded and established in the township of Bandarawela by my wife Yasmin and myself on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2011 at the behest of the local health and educational authorities who lacked necessary resources and means to help children with disabilities and their families overcome many untold hardships and challenges. While we continue to persevere with our ongoing commitments, non-Sri Lankan philanthropists, close friends, former colleagues in Sri Lanka and Australia and family members are the predominant supporters of our mission.

Significant progress has been made by VACD over the past (almost) 7 years to help approximately 350+ children registered with us, thanks to our dedicated and focused Board members, 96 selfless volunteers and 6 efficient paid staff. While all expenses incurred are entirely deployed in Sri Lanka, we have managed to keep our administration costs to 3% of

**A: 26 Worthing Place, Cherrybrook NSW 2126, Australia  
E: [fstephen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:fstephen@bigpond.net.au) / [vacd@vacd.org.au](mailto:vacd@vacd.org.au)  
W: <http://www.vacd.org.au>**



overall expenditures because of the diligence of our leadership team in Sri Lanka who ensure that donations are utilised principally for the benefit of our children.

***This is a clarion call to the Sri Lankan diaspora, Sri Lankan institutions, corporates, small and large businesses and altruistic individuals to be part of this incredible, challenging and immensely rewarding journey by actively contributing and helping us to extend our reach to remote and poverty-stricken rural areas of the country because we are the only hope for these vulnerable children and their families.***

### **How can you be part of our mission and help our children and their families?**

There are three specific areas that need your support (other than the paramount one of providing us with regular financial support) to maintain our centres:

1. A significant number of VACD families (single parent and single income) find it extremely difficult and challenging to cope with their daily basic household expenses, medication and special requirements for their disabled children. Please consider making a monthly donation of A\$20 or its equivalent to sponsor a family, all of which will go directly to that family's bank account via the VACD bank account under our **Family Assistance Program (FAP)**;
2. We identify and assist children with disabilities or their siblings who show academic potential the opportunity to achieve their future aspirations and goals by funding their studies to the amount of A\$ 20 a month under our **Educational Assistance Program (EAP)**, thus ensuring that their education is not disrupted due to financial constraints. These funds go directly to the bank account of the child via the VACD bank account;
3. We provide children who attend our centre in Bandarawela with nutritious high protein/high fibre meals such as green gram, chickpeas, sweet potatoes and cassava etc. following the advice given to us by a visiting public health inspector who found many of our children severely undernourished. You can either provide dry rations as per above or funds to support this **Nutrition Program Initiative (NPI)** that was launched by us a few years ago.

Please visit our webpage <http://www.vacd.org.au/> for more information about the above programs or reach out to us at: [fstephen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:fstephen@bigpond.net.au) so that we can guide you as to how you can be a sponsor of these programs.

### **Annual General Meeting of VACD Australia:**

The AGM of VACD Australia was held on Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> September in Sydney. The Chairman's report to the board for 2017/18 and the annual financial report can be viewed via the following links:

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<http://vacd.org.au/images/Docs/VACDChairmans%20AnnualReporttotheBoardofDirerctos2018.pdf>

[http://vacd.org.au/images/Docs/VACD%20Ltd%20Financial%20Statement%20for%20FY%202017\\_2018.pdf](http://vacd.org.au/images/Docs/VACD%20Ltd%20Financial%20Statement%20for%20FY%202017_2018.pdf)

**Regular Clinics at the VACD Centre in Bandarawela followed by Welimada:**



Dr. Tiraj Mendis – Paediatric Consultant – Provincial General Hospital Badulla (Third from right) and Dr. Chaminda Liyanage – Paediatric Consultant Base Hospital Welimada (third from left) have very kindly volunteered to conduct regular clinics for our children at the VACD centre in Bandarawela followed by Welimada once this centre is established. This initiative was suggested by Dr. Mendis to help children seeking medical attention and assistance avert many difficulties, hardships and inconveniences encountered by them.

**Thank you, Dear Principal and staff of Vishaka Girls College, – Bandarawela:**

We deeply appreciate and wish to place on record our sincere thanks and gratitude to Mrs. R.M. Vayoni Vishaka Rajapaksha – Principal Vishaka Girls College Bandarawela for her magnanimity in extending an invitation to our two disabled VACD athletes and finalists from the Uva Province - Avishka Imesh Kumara (1<sup>st</sup> – Putt Shot, 1<sup>st</sup> 100m – Under 15 years), and Malki Nimasha (1<sup>st</sup> Long-Jump, 2<sup>nd</sup> 100m, 2<sup>nd</sup> Discuss – over 15 years) to be trained by the Vishaka instructors

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and coaches at their school grounds in preparation for the national competition to be held in Colombo.



Extreme left: Malki Nimasha, coaches and instructors from Vishaka college, and Avishka Kumara on the extreme right.

**VACD Sri Lanka are looking for suitable premises in Bandarawela & Welimada:**

Our leadership team in Sri Lanka are looking for suitable premises to be rented/ leased on a long-term basis in **Bandarawela** and **Welimada**. The premises should be easily accessible to children with disabilities, have enough space for a classroom, office etc. and garden space for children to play and exercise.

Please contact – Secretary VACD Sri Lanka- Colonel R M Kumarasinghe – E-mail: [vacdsrilanka@gmail.com](mailto:vacdsrilanka@gmail.com) or phone: +94 (0) 77 728 3535 (Mobile), +94 (0) 57 222 3010 (Office) should you be able to assist or guide him. Thank you.

**New Guinness World Record for VACD Australia Director & Board Member:**

Andrew (Andy) Heyden - Institutional Director at Aberdeen Standard Investments – Sydney and founder director and board member of VACD Australia, who has a passion for long-distance running, ran his first marathon in London back in 1995 aged 21 and is still looking for new challenges.

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On 16th September, Andy looking for a new challenge and a bit of fun, competed in the marathon at the Sydney running festival in a fancy dress and attempted to break an existing Guinness World Record. Andy chose to run dressed as a monk as he liked the parallel of the discipline required to train for a marathon.



The existing record for 'Fastest Marathon Dressed as a Monk' was 3 hrs 2 mins which Andy broke at the Sydney race in 2 hrs 43 mins, setting a new world record!!!

Andy told me 'It was great fun and seemed to help lift the spirits of many others in the race'. He also wanted to raise awareness for those that face far greater challenges every day, such as our VACD children in Sri Lanka who he supports.

You can find Andy and his story on his LinkedIn page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6448350966499545088/>

### **VACD Centre Bandarawela:**

The present VACD centre in Bandarawela will be re-located by late February 2019 when the current 3-year lease runs out. The centre will be known as the "Sir Robert Clark Centre for Children with Disabilities" in recognition and appreciation of the significant financial and

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moral support given to us by his son Mr. William. R.H. Clark, since the establishment of VACD. Signboards displaying the name of the centre will be erected after the relocation.

### **VACD centre in Welimada:**

Plans are under way to establish a VACD centre in the township of Welimada as early as possible because there are a significant number of known children with disabilities in that region. This centre will be named “Dora Jeanne Centre for Children with Disabilities” in appreciation and recognition of the substantial financial support and guidance provided to VACD by Mr. Greg Fendler – (VACD Australia Director & Board member), his family and his father Mr. Frank Fendler – (VACD USA Board member).

Ms. Dora Jeanne (Dora – “God’s Gift” in Greek and Jeanne – “God is Gracious” in French) is the older sibling of Mr. Greg Fendler.

### **VACD Badulla Centre:**

Once the Welimada centre is fully established and functioning, we will concentrate our efforts towards opening a centre in the township of Badulla.

**Please share this newsletter with your family, friends, loved ones and colleagues so that together we can make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities.**

Our sincere thanks to all of you for your continued invaluable support, guidance, counselling and assistance and for being part of this incredible, challenging and immensely rewarding journey.

Many thanks, best wishes and warm regards.... Felix

### **Felix Stephen**

Chairman of the Board of Directors - VACD Ltd. Sydney – Australia - <http://www.vacd.org.au/>

Member of the Advisory Board – VACD USA – <http://www.vacdusa.org/>

Member of the Advisory Board – VACD Sri Lanka

Senior Associate – Cognoscenti Group – Sydney – Australia- <http://www.cognoscenti.global/>

Consultant - Investment Committee - Lonsec - Sydney – Australia - <https://www.lonsec.com.au/>

Member of Investment Committee - Arrive Wealth Management - Brisbane – Australia -

<http://brisbane.arrivewealthmanagement.com.au/>

Consultant - Global Financial Market Investment Research & Investment Strategy

E-mail: [felixswstephen@gmail.com](mailto:felixswstephen@gmail.com) / [fstephen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:fstephen@bigpond.net.au)

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