

Report by President of *Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated* to the Annual General Meeting 25 October, 2005.

I am pleased to welcome you to the second Annual General Meeting of the *Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated (FOSAI)*.

Membership

Our growing membership stretches throughout Australia from Western Australia to Tasmania and from the Northern Territory to Victoria. The largest section of members reside in Queensland. Membership at the 30 June, 2004, stood at 75. Despite a quiet year for FOSAI current membership stands at 96. As I stated last year, I believe that there are many Christians in Australian churches who would wish to give support to the Palestinian Christians in their quest for justice for the Palestinian people. We are in the process of putting together a kit to be used by members of FOSAI to encourage a wider membership. I welcome any suggestions as to how we might increase awareness of FOSAI in the Australian churches.

Patrons

Last year the following persons we noted, and acknowledged, each as a Patron of *Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated*

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| 1. Sr Veronica Brady | 8. Sr Josephine Warne CHN |
| 2. Rev'd Dr James Haire | 9. Rev'd Tim Costello |
| 3. Dr Lorna Hallahan | 10. Fr Peter Kennedy |
| 4. Archbishop Peter Carnley | 11. Bishop John Gerry |
| 5. Bishop John Noble | 12. Bishop George Browning |
| 6. Bishop Roger Herft | 13. Rev'd John Woodley |
| 7. Bishop John Bayton | 14. Rev'd Dr Noel Preston |

We appreciate their being prepared to be noted publicly as patrons of FOSAI and we value their support. Tonight we are particularly grateful that the Rev'd Tim Costello has been able to come as our special guest speaker for this 2005 annual general meeting.

Thanks to the Rev'd Dr Greg Jenks

FOSAI is indebted to Greg Jenks for the work he has put into setting up and maintaining the FOSAI website. It is attractive and is a source for important information relevant to the aims of FOSAI. It can be accessed at:
www.faithfutures.org/sabeel.html

Activities

The main activity this year was a meeting sponsored by FOSAI at which the speaker was a visiting Palestinian Christian Zack Sabella held on Friday, 15 July at St Francis' College. Over thirty people attended which was an encouraging roll up.

Zack Sabella is a 21 year-old graduate of Business and IT from Jerusalem. Presently he works with a solar physics project conducted by Dr Hanna Hallak at Bethlehem University in the Palestinian territories. His tour was sponsored by *World Christian Service*.

FOSAI Newsletter

Thanks are due to John Roberts who, as well as being secretary FOSAI has worked jointly with Ray Barraclough in producing irregular (but we hope readable) FOSAI newsletters as well as other important pieces of information from *Sabeel*. These are all important means of communication pertinent to the aims of FOSAI here in Australia.

Postage of *Corner Stone*

Copies of the *Sabeel* quarterly *Corner Stone* have been posted regularly to all members. As well FOSAI carries the cost of posting *Corner Stone* to subscribers in Australia, New Zealand and Kiribati.

Wider agendas

In the *FOSAI Newsletter* to be posted out with *Corner Stone* hopefully later this week, there will be a copy of the statement issued by *Sabeel* entitled *A Call for Morally Responsible Investment – A Non-violent Strategy to Ending the Occupation*. At a recent meeting of the *Anglican Consultative Council* a resolution was passed that commended the Episcopal Church (USA) for resolving to take appropriate action 'where it finds that its corporate investments support the occupation of Palestinian lands or violence against innocent Israelis'.

Also in the newsletter will be excerpts from a paper produced by the *Sabeel Center* entitled *Reflections on the Gaza Disengagement – Facts and Concerns*. *Sabeel*, as well as many in the international community, welcomed the Israeli government's decision to withdraw settlers from Gaza.

One recent significant event was the speech that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon delivered to the United Nations on the 15th September, 2005. In it he naturally reiterated Israeli claims to a e and secure existence in the region. He went on to say:

The right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel does not mean disregarding the rights of others in the land. The Palestinians will always be our neighbours. We respect them, and have no aspirations to rule over them. They are also entitled to freedom and to a national, sovereign existence in a state of their own.

Sabeel Youth Conference

Finally, FOSAI is seeking to encourage suitable young Australian adults to attend the first *International Sabeel Young Adults Conference* to be held in Jerusalem from 28th July to 5th August, 2006. There will be more information about this project in the forthcoming newsletter.

Thanks

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Greg Jenks, Helen Dewar and John Roberts for their work in regard to FOSAI and its promotion in Australia. I particularly appreciate the work Helen has done in regards to the financial affairs of FOSAI.

Ray Barraclough
25/10/05