

## To promote International Understanding and Friendship

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2011, sixteen Apexians from around south east Queensland; seven from Toowoomba, two from West Toowoomba, two from Chinchilla and five from Brisbane City met at the Gold Coast Airport at 7:00am ready for a loosely arranged tour to the Singapore and Malaysia National Conventions. Following about 10hours in the air and a stopover in Kuala Lumpur, we arrived on a couple of different flights in Singapore, ready to start our adventure.

The local Singapore Apexians are an extraordinary group, with projects that put other Apex clubs and associations to shame. There are three clubs in Singapore, with a total of only 25 members, yet they run a food distribution program which costs \$200,000 a year as well as operating two major facilities at a cost of more than \$5,000,000 annually. They do get Government support for the majority of the facilities budgets, however the food distribution and the shortfall is met through fundraising and hard work in securing corporate support.



Figure 1 Aussie Apexians helping with the Singapore food distribution

As well as being very industrious, the Singaporeans are the friendliest Apexians I have yet to come across. No problem is too big, no request too hard and a smile for every occasion. We were well hosted, with lovely food, good advice on local attractions and of course thousands of photos which many would already have seen on Facebook. The other notable thing with the Singaporeans is how young the group is. They have resisted the urge to extend/open the age limit, and retain the same 18-45 as Australia, though their Life Members and TBOs (too bloody old) remain involved as mentors and to provide assistance with corporate connections.

Following our whirlwind trip to Singapore, we had a couple of shopping days in Kuala Lumpur, a great destination for those who like to shop and chase a bargain. My wife purchased four handbags, through was outdone by the shopping guru, Lauren, who came home with twelve. I even got into the act, buying three pairs of shoes and a new camera. While in KL, we were treated to a beautiful meal

at a restaurant owned by Life Member C.S. Naidu. On the next day, the local club took us on a tour of a couple of schools that they provide funding for, another example of the great work being achieved by clubs overseas.



Figure 2 NP Chris with students and the Gifts provided by Toowoomba.

Thursday saw us travel to the location of the Malaysian convention, Kuantan, on the east coast of Malaysia. A few of us went via the Elephant Sanctuary at Kuala Gandah, which was a great experience with these majestic animals. The travel plans did not go entirely as expected on the day, and all of us ended up a little frustrated and weary, however, this all adds to the experience and provides more story fodder.

Once in Kuantan, we were treated to a Malaysian beach resort, where many Aus Apexians discovered the wonders of the cocktail bar around the pool and the in house massage. I am surprised we did not arouse the wrath of security, as our in-room party on Friday night which went until 5am could be heard from around the resort.

On Friday, Jim McNall and I attended the Global meeting, which was an interesting affair. It is clear that most of the Apex Nations continue to look to us for guidance and support, which can be difficult when we are dealing with our own issues. The forum discussed:

- The Mosquito Trial in Bangladesh, which they are keen to continue an involvement with and were seeking additional funds, however, the general consensus was that our financial involvement was complete, and we should only remain involved so that we can transfer the knowledge to other Apex Nations.
- The need to update the web site, which will remain the responsibility of Australia
- The globetrotter magazine, which will also be an Australian responsibility.

- Communications problems; it was made clear that there has been a lack of communication between the group members, and a great difficulty in obtaining material for the globetrotter and website. I advised that while we will retain technical responsibility for these comms tools, it will be the responsibility of the executive to obtain material.
- Fiji and Sri Lanka were reintroduced to Global as associate members while they work at rebuilding their association. It was good to hear that they are trying to get back up and running again. I am pleased to say that Apex Aus, and particularly IPNP Jeff has had a lot to do with this.
- Indonesia was also admitted as an associate member following their formal registration as an NGO in Indonesia. The two new clubs there are coming along well, and have started involving themselves in active service work in the community. I applaud Kate Huth National IR Manager for her commendable and tireless work on this.

Following the global meeting, the Australians were in fine voice at the welcome social, where for some strange reason they temporarily ran out of beer! Jim and I were judges at their public speaking competition, which I don't remember much of, and overall much fun was had by all. Saturday was a lazy day for most of the Aussies, most of whom got massages and lazed around the pool. I wish I was there with them; however I was in the Malaysian business session all day, an experience to say the least. What could have been a quick and effective convention discussing new initiatives and devising plans to encourage youth membership degenerated into a bit of a point scoring contest between some of the older members, who took verbal pot shots at each other across the convention floor.

Saturday evening was really nice at the Gala Dinner, which incorporated their awards night, National Handover and Global handover. Another lovely meal, some fun entertainment and some more product from their major sponsor, Carlsberg Beer. I am sure I was in a thousand photos that night, finishing the evening with a white spot in my vision from all of the flashes. It was all in good fun however, and I know that the Australians made a good impression and were well received by the Global Apex community.

Figure 3 Global representatives from the various Apex Nations



Just prior to heading home, we had a final social luncheon with the local club and all of the internationals at a Nursing Home in Kuantan which is both run by and fully funded by their club president, an extraordinary effort. This last taste of service and life in Malaysia brought home just how lucky we are in this country.

In all we had a great time, met some fantastic people and developed new stories which will be talked about at Apex events for many years to come. I can highly recommend this trip to all Apexians, to go and visit our Apex friends and get a real taste of international understanding and friendship.



Figure 4 Aussies in form at the Singapore Convention