

Meeting Notes Wed 25 July 2018

25 members present

Stuart Wineberg chaired meeting.

Speaker – Chris Lee “Detainees, Doctors and Drains”

Chris, an Australian retired engineer and friend of Neill Beasley talked about his experiences as a volunteer working with Mediciens sans Frontieres (MSF) providing and repairing infrastructure at refugee centres in Libya.

The centres run by UN HCR in Libya hold a mixture of true refugees from countries such as Eritrea and Somalia, economic migrants from countries like Nigeria who will ultimately be repatriated and people who have fallen foul of Libyan visa rules and want to be returned to their own countries .

The engineering support he provided to MSF at the centre in Misrata was mainly directed towards improving sanitation and hence improving health. Though he provided guidance and leadership, most of the work was done by the migrants who were both willing to help and who also had the necessary technical skills – though perhaps not well versed in health and safety!

He showed examples of repairing blocked toilets, digging new septic tanks and providing water supplies and the means to chlorinate them. He noted a couple of examples where bureaucracy hindered progress – regarding the steel frames for supporting water tanks as potential weapons that therefore had to be chained to the window frames and removal of toothpaste from hygiene kits because it might be used to corrode through window bars!

He found the Libyans easy to work with and honest and that western views of the subjugation of women were perhaps exaggerated since women could exert influence in subtle ways.

In answer to questions – There is no structured education for the children (most of whom are 6 years and younger) .

He came into this work through the Australian Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief (REDR).

Neill Beasley gave the vote of thanks and noted that Chris was a bit of a polymath – always wanting to find out how things worked. He had brought along a model trebuchet that he had built to find out exactly how it could throw missiles so far – and gave a demonstration.

Rotary Business

Jim Purdie requested that people picking up WTTW brochures from the TH storeroom should ensure that it is left in a tidy state.

Next meeting : Council and Business meeting August 1st. Room prep - Mike Thorne + Clive Collier Grace - Mike Thorne

Regards John G





