

2017 HOTA Forum at Shri Ram Krishna Temple, Austral

The 4th Australian HOTA Forum was organised at Shri Ram Krishna Temple, Austral on Sunday, 7th May 2017. HOTA (Hindu Organisations, Temples and Associations) is a forum of participating Hindu temples and other Hindu organisations working together to discuss and deliberate various topics of common interest, issues, ideas and opportunities with the objective of enhancing community service and preservation of Hindu culture.

HOTA was launched by Sri Swami Vigyanand Ji at 3rd Australian National Hindu Conference in April 2014. Sydney's Sri Ayyappa Temple, Shiv Mandir at Minto and Sri Venkateswara Temple at Helensburgh had hosted the HOTA Forums in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. Each year, under the VHP HOTA co-ordination, one of the Forum participants will host the events and all participating organisations will collaboratively work through the year on the plans and projects coming out of the Forum.

Shri Ram Krishna Temple at Austral hosted the fourth HOTA forum on Sunday, 7th may 2017 at the temple premises. More than 20 temples and Hindu cultural associations came together and each presented their contributions and future ideas for community service, which will never be possible by working individually in isolation. Quoting Swami Ji, *"HOTA demonstrates that there is definitely added strength and value in sharing resources, networking, collaborating and working together..."*.

Sri Rudra Kumar, VHP HOTA co-ordinator spoke on the vision, benefits of conducting HOTA Forum as an annual project by networking and collaborating on a common platform. He also presented evidence on how similar HOTA Forums have benefited the cause of preserving Hindu culture and enhancing community service in other countries such as USA and New Zealand.

The President of Shree Ram Krishna Temple Sri Anil Singh welcomed the delegates with an extremely inspiring opening address, compelling all of the delegates to think about a need to put a unified effort to achieve forum objectives of serving the Hindu community in an effective manner.

Also, General Secretary Sri Parjeet Singh and his team helped in coordinating the the forum including arrangement of morning tea and a healthy lunch for the delegates.

Also, it was a pleasure to see the presence and active participation of Sri Raj Dutta, Strathfield Councillor and Sri Natarajan (Nat) Iyer of Sri Venkateswara Temple, who always extend their hands towards serving the community service organisations and the grand vision of opportunities that lie ahead of the Hindu community as part of multi-cultural Australia.

The discussions and brainstorming sessions by all the participating organisations were very productive and illuminating to all the participants.

The outcome of the forum as agreed through the group discussions and subsequent presentations made by three teams of delegates resulted into a number of initiatives, which are assigned to following champions:

1. Champion: Ham Gopalan (Sree Ram Krishna Temple - SSSD)
 - a. Youth Engagement and Development – Motivate, Train and Involve
 - Preventive measures to keep youth away from drug abuse;

- Fact based educational workshops on accurate understanding of Indian culture and values, to be proud of being a Hindu and Indian;
 - Encouragement and Involvement in environment protection by planting trees and contribution to local community by blood donation etc.
 - Assistance in Youth Job Search;
- b. Women's Empowerment – Use of Communication Skills, Handling Difficult Situations
- Understanding real causes of domestic violence;
 - Arranging volunteers for counselling workshops for men & women separately & together;
 - Encouraging them to teach Indian languages based on their skills, and spread a message of power of unity among all Indians;
- c. Government Funding – Explore and Pursue
- Gaining knowledge of availability of various State and Federal Governments assistances;
 - Pursue using appropriate approaches through effective networking and right contacts within the community;
2. Champion: Jaishankar (VCCA) & Arunesh Seth Ji
- a. Training and Stakeholder Engagement
- Training of Youth, Community, Priests;
- b. Purpose
- Maintain Hindu traditions and culture, chanting;
 - On-going sustainance of Temples
- c. Actions:
- Set up a Web Site for Stakeholder Connections
 - Identify suburbs and local co-ordinators
 - Prepare a plan for co-ordination / Promotion.
 - Appoint teachers/place/communications.
 - Publish and share progress
3. Champion: Vijay and Rajesh Ji (SEWA International)
- a. Hindu Blood Donation Drive
- Collaboration;
 - Coordination;
 - Youth Engagement;
- b. SEWA Web Site for Cross Communication and via places such as Facebook;
- Hindu United Calendar;
 - Events of HOTA temples and organisations;
 - Assistance in Job Search/Retrieval;
4. Champion: Dave Passi (Indian Seniors Group Hornsby)
- a. Educating & Assisting senior citizens
- Recently arrived grandparents sponsored by their children who come to Australia are left out alone due to lack of communication, customs and habits;
 - Educate and engage them providing a platform to meet, greet and enjoy life in their new country;

The Champions will lead and organise the focus groups sessions with delegates who expressed interests, plan and action their respective initiatives on a regular basis i.e. monthly or quarterly as suitable.

The notable achievements on these initiatives can be communicated periodically. The HOTA co-ordinators (Rudra Kumar and Ramarathinam) will follow up with Champions on a regular basis on the progress of these initiatives.

The Champions will plan to represent and showcase their progress and achievements in the next year HOTA forum.

The tentative nomination for 2018 HOTA forum is Mukti Gupteshwar Mandir Minto

The HOTA baton symbolising the HOTA's vision of *"people of all ages and gender working together"* was handed over from Sri Venkateswara Temple to Shree Ram Krishna Temple.

