



## FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### *The Threefold Social Organism and the First Waldorf School*

*Anthroposophy, as a worldwide spiritual movement, is connected to approximately ten thousand groups and institutions. Some of the most well-known of these institutions are Waldorf schools. The task of anthroposophy is action based on insight. Such insight, based on the threefold social organism and the impulse for social change, inspired the first Waldorf school, founded in Stuttgart in 1919 by Emil Molt, director of the Waldorf-Astoria factory.*

*As we begin this century we must again ask ourselves how true social progress will be made. The original impulse that guided Emil Molt and Rudolf Steiner in establishing the first Waldorf school is stated by Rudolf Steiner in *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*: "But in our case there was no question of founding yet another country boarding school, nor of implementing a particular brand of educational principles. Our aim was to attempt to heal social ills and to serve the needs of mankind in general."*

*When in July 1917 Rudolf Steiner presented his proposal addressing the problems of society at that time to the German and Austrian governments, internal turmoil made any consideration of his ideas impossible. Steiner realized that the needed social change could not result from political coercion or upheaval. A truly human society could only be the outcome of fully developed capacities of thinking, feeling, and willing.<sup>2</sup> Human social change would not be possible until a sufficient number of people had received an education that undertook to develop complete human beings.*

*In starting the first Waldorf school, based on the threefold social organism, Rudolf Steiner regarded these basic principles as necessary:*

- 1. Independence from the state in developing the curriculum*
- 2. Education of boys and girls together*
- 3. Attendance of all children who so wished*
- 4. Freedom of the teacher in the classroom*
- 5. School self-administration*
- 6. Development of capacities for the future*
- 7. Understanding of the child's development of spirit, soul, and body<sup>3</sup>*

(Roscoe, Revised 2005)

This Financial Contribution Assistance Program seeks to partially address the question of accessibility in relation to the third ideal: **Attendance of all children who so wish**

We recognise at SVSS that we must, where we can, strive to address issues of financial accessibility and find ways to include children from all economic levels and circumstances in society.

If our primary goal is to become a source of social change then our acceptance of a child into the school should not be limited by the financial resources of the child's family. We strive to work from the principle that if Waldorf education is truly valued by a family then insufficient financial capacity should not necessarily exclude the family and child from the opportunity to receive such an education.



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This does not ignore the fact that robust fiscal responsibility (parent and school) and management must be maintained and the challenge for the school and the community is to find ways to ensure the two aspects of financial accessibility and financial responsibility are balanced.

### **The Nature of 'School Fees' or Tuition Fees in a Steiner Context**

Education is a cultural activity and as such an important premise that is centrally held at SVSS is the ideal that the education be as free as possible from the influence of politics and economics. Of course the school costs money to run and this money in Australian Steiner Schools is sourced from Government Funding and from financial contributions made by parents of the children attending the school. This income is necessary and the school relies on a level of reliability in this domain to ensure that the resource needs can be met.

We should however avoid seeing school fees as a 'purchase' of education for children or that the parent and child are 'consumers' of what the school offers. Rather the contribution that parents make is a kind of gift that enables the school to operate and the teachers to bring to life an experience for all the children.

It is recognised that all parents come with a different capacity to contribute **and** that the school needs a predictable and reliable source of income to ensure that it can continue to make ends meet.

One way we attempt to meet and address this potential tension is to offer a Financial Contribution Assistance Program to parents who may have less capacity to contribute.

### **How is the Financial Contribution Assistance Program resourced?**

The Financial Contribution Assistance Program draws on five potential revenue sources.

#### **1. Annual Operational Budgetary allocation for Contribution Assistance**

SVSS includes in annual financial budgeting a base amount of money to be offered as tuition support through the Financial Contribution Assistance Program. This allocation relies on the premise that all community members recognise and support the school's core mission of creating social change, and as such this money is offered as gift from the collective funds available to the school to enable access for a number of students who otherwise would not be able to attend. This money provides a base for annual allocations and is extended and increased through the following four potential supplementary sources. This base allocation demonstrates the school's inherent commitment to financial accessibility and the supplementary sources allow the community to demonstrate its commitment towards social health and renewal.

#### **2. Voluntary Staff Contribution to Financial Contribution Assistance Program**

Staff are able to contribute to the Financial Contribution Assistance Program by electing to gift an identified portion of their wage each week towards the Program.

#### **3. Voluntary Parent Contribution to Financial Contribution Assistance Program**

Parents have opportunity to contribute towards the Financial Contribution Assistance Program by identifying a voluntary contribution amount on their payment advice (similar to the building fund donation).



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## 4. Student Support

A social change group of high school students considers ways in which current students can contribute to support other (unidentified) students within the school. Actions may include:

- Fundraising activities
- Individual student contributions/sponsorship/donations
- Regular income producing projects e.g. the incoming glass bottle return scheme; regular clothing recycle stall at Friday Foodies etc.

## 5. Local Business Contribution to the Financial Contribution Assistance Program

Approach is made to Local Business and/or businesses closely aligned with school ethos for donation to the Financial Contribution Assistance Program. A full or significant percentage bursary offered by a local business will be named as such (e.g. the >business name> Student Bursary) on the school website and in school enrolment docs as advertising incentive.

## How is the Financial Contribution Assistance Program allocated?

The Financial Contribution Assistance Program allocation needs to be determined through rigorous process to discern and prioritise applicant needs. Current and prospective families make application for assistance using the Financial Contribution Assistance Program Application Forms. Applications are assessed based on individual merit by a Financial Contribution Assistance Program Allocation Group consisting of the Director, the Business Administrator and the Board Chair. Because this group needs to be privy to the private financial and circumstantial information of families applying, it is considered that these three roles have the level of authority required for the appropriate handling of private and confidential information. The Financial Contribution Assistance Program Allocation Group is guided by and works to a clearly defined set of parameters. Each Assistance Package offered is for a **12-month term and all Assistance recipients are reassessed annually**.

The group meets in August of each school year to review existing, and determine new, Financial Contribution Assistance Program allocations for the following school year.

## Volunteering

Families successfully achieving Financial Contribution Assistance will be encouraged to identify other ways in which they are able to contribute to the life of the school and the community. This capacity to contribute forms part of the Assistance Agreement. Volunteering is a means for recipients to exchange time and expertise for the assistance received as gift from other members of the school community. This creates a mutually beneficial relationship for all.

School cleaning is one such activity that may be covered within this program.

***The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community the virtue of each one is living.***

— Rudolf Steiner

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## Works Cited

Roscoe, B. M. (Revised 2005). *Accessible to all (ATA) Tuition Adjustment Program*. California: Institute for Social Renewal.