

We The People  
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We the People 319 The Red Frog story



**Good day to you.** Located in Panama is the island of Bastimentos named by Christopher Columbus in 1502 and he called the island "provisions" , hence in Spanish, Bastimentos. Now on this island lives a unique frog called Oophaga pumilio the 'Red Frog' because of its colour, giving rise to one of their favoured beaches called Red Frog Beach. This handsome little frog is a key survivor in this micro environment and exhibits special skills for endurance.

Now just recently my dissonant associate Cr Dawn Crichlow told me in no uncertain terms that I don't know everything and ironically it turns out she was right. As it came to pass I have only now discovered the little Red Frog but not in Panama but right here on the Gold Coast. Apparently it all began around 1997 on the Coast when a self proclaimed downhill skate boarder, accountant and Christian pastor saw the need to assist schoolies in their post high school celebrations. Andy Gourley is the founder of the Red Frog chaplaincy movement to help schoolies be safe during their celebrations and he and his volunteer teams have a done a fantastic job. The Red Frog movement came about by accident or perhaps divine guidance. He couldn't gain access to high rise hotels to check on the welfare of the young people. However, incredibly he discovered that a particular lolly did the trick and he was welcomed into the hotels, boarding houses and motels using, of all things, a Red Frog jelly lolly made by the Allen's Sweets company. Why this resonated with the young school leavers is beyond me but it has provided a golden key which is trusted by the schoolies fraternity and grateful parents everywhere.

In the first year Andy bought 80 kilos of Red Frogs then the next year 440 kg then the next 1.2 tonnes and today Allen's Sweets provide 24 tonnes a year free of charge to the Red Frog chaplaincy initiative which is an outstanding contribution to the welfare of our young people. Andy Gourley appears to be a diamond in the rough to me but a diamond none the less and his pragmatic approach in helping school leavers earned him an international leadership award in 2015. The modelling of culture and behaviour is very much a part of Andy's personal approach to interacting with young people. Andy readily shares his stories and principles on culture change with audiences nationally and internationally. His approach is raw and real, and he provides realistic strategies on *"becoming the answer you want to see around you"*. Red Frogs make it their mission to provide a positive peer presence in environments where young people gather, educate them on safe partying behaviour and empower them to make positive choices for their future and he does it using their lingo and Allen's Red Frogs. Their volunteers act as the eyes and ears in accommodation venues and out on the streets, providing a positive presence to school leavers and their presence is readily accepted through the power of the red croaker.

Andy tells stories of the positive result of being at *'the edge of the cliff to save them and not at the bottom to deal with the aftermath'* which creates a real world image of the challenge. Normally I would be drawn to ask why young people see happiness and alcohol linked to celebration and why they take such horrendous risks with their lives but today I'm not following that course rather just applauding the pragmatic and practical approach of pastor Andy Gourley. So many schoolies have been saved from death or serious injury and doing things which may ruin the rest of their lives. So now you know about these little Red Frogs and what they represent. *Whether it's the Red Frog movement on the Gold Coast or the little Red Frog on Bastimentos island..... both are survivors.*

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**