



09/10

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT

Highlights

The past 12 months saw countless successes at the ASRC. We proudly continued to be there as an organisation when and where it mattered caring for all asylum seekers in need.

ASRC IS ABOUT PEOPLE



- 24 paid staff (FTE)
- 600 volunteers
- 1096 members

In the past financial year, the **ASRC helped over 1000 asylum seekers.**

Awards

The work of the ASRC continued to be recognised for its innovation, contribution to the welfare of marginalised communities, and for the positive contribution it made to greater respect for cultural diversity within the Australian community.

2010

- > Winner, Kookaburra Award—Best Community Group in Australia (sponsored by Westpac and Our Community).
- > 2010 Churchill Fellowship awarded to ASRC CEO, Kon Karapangiotidis.
- > Victorian Tamil Cultural Association Appreciation Award (Pamela Curr, ASRC Campaign Coordinator).
- > Finalist for the Melbourne Awards, City of Melbourne (Contribution to the Community).
- > Winner, FABO Award (Front and Back Office)—IT Support of the Year (Leigh Wardle, ASRC IT Coordinator).
- > Winner, Phonse Tobin Volunteer Award (North Melbourne Rotary Club) (Sophia Riveroll, ASRC Mentoring Program).



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CEO's Report

In the last year I have witnessed the very best and worst of humanity. Hundreds of new people seeking asylum have come through our doors at the ASRC, each carrying a story of courage, loss and struggle, kept alive only by hope. In those first moments of arrival at the ASRC the air is often filled with despair, uncertainty and fear about where to from here. Uncertainty as to it being another night sleeping in a park, a third day with no food or the day ending with being locked up in a detention centre.

What continues to inspire me after nine years as the CEO of the ASRC is that in these moments of despair my staff and volunteers are there, ready to do whatever it takes to make sure no one goes hungry, homeless or without hope. We remain a place of genuine welcome and sanctuary and stay true to our founding principle to 'turn no asylum seeker in need away'. Each day we have the privilege of working with resilient, extraordinary people who have sacrificed and risked everything to be free.

Unlike what our major political parties and mainstream media try to convince us of, asylum seekers are not illegal or a danger to our way of life or something to fear, rather they are resourceful people with so much to offer our country. Asylum seekers are our invisible heroes, people willing to risk their own lives to make the world a better place.

The successes of this year are plentiful: over 1000 asylum seekers assisted, winning public transport concession travel in Victoria, finding jobs for over 100 people, helping end the 45 day rule and detention debt, to name but a few. The numbers tell only a small part of the success story though. What we are most proud of is what we stand for and keep teaching and communicating each day to our community.

Namely that the issue we face when it comes to asylum seekers is not a political one but a moral and humanitarian one. It is compassion, a fair go and perspective that we need in our country. Tougher border protection and expanding detention centres are not the answer. This approach only punishes genuine refugees and robs people of their right to be treated humanely and with justice.

In the coming year the ASRC will continue to use its independence to fight for an end to mandatory detention and offshore processing, ensure there are no children in detention, guarantee the universal access to the right to work and health care for all asylum seekers and access to the same fair go we all enjoy here as Australian residents.

To people who say asylum seekers don't deserve fair treatment I ask you to stop for a moment and think 'what if that was me with no right to work or health care watching my family go hungry', 'my family in a detention centre with no freedom', 'my children on that leaky boat fighting for their lives', what would you hope for in that moment?

Kon Karapanagiotidis, CEO
November 2010

Chair's Report

The 2009/2010 year has been another busy one for the ASRC. We continued to provide a larger range of services to asylum seekers than any other organisation, and we've expanded and adapted our programs to deliver even better outcomes. This report highlights the many positive impacts we've achieved throughout the past year.

We have of course also faced many challenges. During this year we witnessed a large backwards step in the political treatment of refugees and those who seek asylum, coupled with an increase in demand for our services. As an organisation that relies on 95% of funding from the community and philanthropy, the funding environment presents ongoing challenges.

Fortunately, the organisation is well equipped to face these challenges, due to an excellent workforce made up of both paid staff and volunteers, with strong leadership from our CEO, Kon Karapanagiotidis. Advocacy and campaigning has been well executed across the organisation, from focused Federal election campaigns to smaller targeted advocacy at a State level. Strategies to diversify funding sources have been put in place which is an important step in achieving financial sustainability.

The ASRC has shown a great capacity to adapt and grow, as it has become more established. This can be seen on both small and large scales. For instance, we developed a strategic vision, which acknowledged the need for the ASRC to be more than just an aid and advocacy organisation. This resulted in re-organisation of our programs into the pillars of aid, empowerment, justice, community and sustainability. On the smaller scale we developed solid policy and processes to support the organisation to operate successfully; the Foodbank's emphasis on nutrition, not just food; the Volunteer Program's emphasis on providing training not just recruitment.

This continual effort to provide even better services, or to assist the organisation to adapt to new circumstances, is highly commendable, as the ASRC was already performing well and doing so with limited resources. The dedication of all who work and volunteer here has proven that this organisation is capable, relevant and has the ability to remain in existence for as long as necessary.

I would like to thank the Board for their continuing efforts over this year. We were joined half way through the year by Joan Grant and Matthew Tutty, two existing ASRC volunteers, and sadly we said goodbye to Jema Stellato-Pledger, who had contributed to the Board over five years.

The coming year will present challenges but I am equally sure we will yet again record many successes. We will bed down our strategic plan, set up indicators to monitor our performance, continue to search for diverse opportunities, and of course, focus on continual improvement in delivering positive outcomes for asylum seekers. I believe we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead. We have great people to lead us into the 2010/2011 year and I thank everyone who supports this organisation for their dedication to such a worthwhile cause.

Julie Francis, ASRC Chair
November 2010



Aid

Community Meals
Aid and Advocacy
Foodbank

“

the people at ASRC are
not human,
they are angels—
angels that I have
been reading about
in Persian stories since
my childhood

”

Community Meals

The Community Meals Program aims to provide nutritious, tasty and culturally appropriate foods to asylum seeking members, staff and volunteers of the ASRC. The act of sharing a healthy meal in a communal dining area increases opportunities to build relationships, learn from one another, socialise; it engenders an inclusive, connected environment.

The program actively seeks contribution and participation from member volunteers, building relationships and providing further opportunities for members to learn basic cooking and English skills. The Community Meals Program provided approximately 25 000 meals in 2009/2010. It afforded approximately 30 volunteers the chance to support people seeking asylum and gave a further 15 members the opportunity to interact with their new community and learn valuable skills. The program also provides a nutritious and tasty hot lunch for 50-80 staff and volunteers of the ASRC as a sign of appreciation for the work done at the centre.

Community Meals Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

The Community Meals Program was a shining example of preventative work. The program promoted wellness and broke down social isolation by providing a welcoming space where connections and a sense of community were developed.

- > The creation of a 0.2FTE position of a Community Meals Program Coordinator to manage the program has helped improve the efficiency and efficacy of the service.
- > Intra-organisational partnerships are being developed between the ASRC Employment, ESL and Community Meals Programs, to create training for members wishing to enter the hospitality industry once they have a right to work and an education.
- > The organisation of celebratory events to mark culturally significant days such as Eid ul-Fitr and Refugee Week.

CHALLENGES

We aim to garner more support for the kitchen in the way of funding so as to continue to produce a high standard of nutritious meals for ASRC members and volunteers. Contributions will also be sought for the purchase of food preparation equipment and most importantly, to further fund the Program Coordinator position, more than the current one day per week. Expansion of this current position would afford the opportunity to succinctly plan the program week by week and invest in more community engagement strategies.

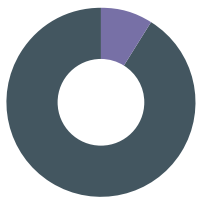
-
- > In 2009/2010 we cooked **hot lunches for 500 people every week** through our Community Meals Program.
-

Aid and Advocacy

Asylum seekers in Australia have no guaranteed right to income, health care or settlement services. They face destitution and adversity in Australia as they struggle to make it from day to day. The Aid and Advocacy Program (AAP) responds to this destitution through the in-house provision of essential items (e.g. Metcards, phone cards, bedding and nappies) as well as through liaison with mainstream Emergency Relief (ER) services to provide other basics such as clothing and computers.

Throughout the year, it is estimated that almost 1096 people were assisted by the AAP, including 498 members of the ASRC. Emergency relief assistance was also offered in more than 5711 instances.

Aid and Advocacy Staff



- 1 paid staff (full-time)
- 10 volunteers

ACHIEVEMENTS

The greatest achievement of the Aid and Advocacy Program during the year was expanding the aid options for asylum seekers and educating the broader community of the need for a universal safety net. The ASRC was able to influence policy at a state government level and access at a community level to promote more sustainable aid pathways for asylum seekers.

Transport

- > 7490 Metcards were issued, reducing social isolation and allowing clients to pick up their weekly groceries. 3500 legal, health and welfare appointments were attended thanks to the assistance of our public transport activities.

Communication

- > 6000 phone cards were issued, linking asylum seekers with communities here and overseas, as well as keeping them in touch with legal, health and welfare supports.

- > Over 140 mobile phones were sourced and distributed to socially isolated asylum seekers.

Essentials

- > Young asylum seeker families were assisted through the provision of 14 173 nappies and all asylum seekers with newborns were offered baby packs containing clothing, blankets and nappies, as well as maternal and baby toiletries.

Advocacy

- > Several research reports and submissions were authored for peak bodies.
- > We successfully lobbied the State Government to introduce a travel concession card for asylum seekers.
- > AAP assisted to establish an asylum seekers' ER network—the ER Working Group.
- > AAP maintained its network of community donors and supporters—Helping Hands.
- > Aid and Advocacy offered assistance to other agencies to develop organisational policies that ensure asylum seekers are eligible for ER services.

CHALLENGES

- > Engaging the mainstream ER sector to develop organisational policies that ensure asylum seekers can independently access ER services on an ongoing and sustainable basis.
- > Gaining commitment from mainstream ER agencies, as well as state and federal governments, to establish and fund asylum seeker-specific ER services.
- > Making a continued and meaningful contribution to ASRC lobbying activities that aim to improve the social and welfare entitlements of community-based asylum seekers.

> In 2009/2010 we **successfully lobbied the State Government** to introduce a travel concession card for asylum seekers.

Foodbank

Foodbank remains an integral service of the ASRC. Without Foodbank, hundreds of asylum seekers would suffer from malnutrition, poor health, depression and indignity.

As of 2010, 75% of ASRC members have no legal right to work or to access welfare payments; consequently they have no money for basic nutrition and other day-to-day essentials. Some 120 families each week are supplied with necessary groceries from Foodbank, 52 weeks a year. Without this support, they would go hungry.

Although we continually develop and enhance the way we do things, our goal of 'food security' for all members remains the same.

Throughout 2009/2010 Foodbank provided:

- > One week's groceries to an average of 120 families every week, this amounts to approximately 264 people.
- > A total of 6240 weeks worth of food for an average family size of 2.2.

Foodbank Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foodbank Program is the leader in the provision of food aid to asylum seekers in Victoria. In the last financial year, it blended the direct provision of essential food, with increasing education on nutrition and also the expansion of food security options for asylum seekers in Victoria through its partnerships with SecondBite, FareShare and Vic Relief+Foodbank. The Foodbank program also produced a television commercial (with a voice-over by Jack Thompson, now running on Channel 7) featuring a Sri Lankan family of five that relied on Foodbank for years.

CHALLENGES

With the escalating price of food and other essentials, Foodbank faces persistent issues in relation to funding. However, with the support of the Survival network, philanthropic partners and other food charities, we can begin to look beyond the provision of food and focus on nutrition education in order to empower asylum seekers to make better food choices. A main focus of Foodbank is to initiate and implement cooking and/or nutrition classes in the coming year.

-
- > In 2009/2010 we supplied **weekly groceries to 120 families every week**, over 75% who have no income.
-



Justice

Campaigns

SASA

Health

Casework

Human Rights Law

Counselling

“

I have been in Australia
for eight years.
I am still waiting for a
protection
visa and I have no
income, work rights or
medicare

”

REMOVE

Campaigns

The ASRC Campaigns Program works to change policy and right injustice in those areas identified by asylum seekers and refugees as critical to their lives.

The Campaigns Program utilised the independence of the ASRC to continue our proud tradition of campaigning without fear or favour to promote and protect the human rights of asylum seekers. We continued to champion the plight of asylum seekers as a humanitarian and moral issue—not a political one. The Campaigns Program remained a vital whistleblower to keep the refugee system in check and shine a much needed light on human rights abuses.

- > We continued to **campaign for an end to offshore detention centres** by calling for the closure of Christmas Island. We are an active member of the Christmas Island Stakeholders Group that meets quarterly in Canberra. The ASRC was the organisation that exposed the first photos and plans of Christmas Island to the media to draw the national attention to what we were doing to asylum seekers.
- > We **advocated for an end to the policy of mandatory detention** before the Senate Inquiry into Immigration system making both oral and written submissions. We also made submissions as part of the National Human Rights consultations.
- > We **campaign for an end to detention debt** by raising public awareness and lobbying DIAC and key stakeholders for an end to this practice (as one of a number of community organisations). In September 2009 we saw an end to detention debts.
- > **We raised awareness of human rights abuses** experienced by asylum seekers through our constant presence and profile in all forms of media throughout the year. We briefed journalists in the radio, print and television media to keep these issues in the public and political domain.

- > We saw the three survivors of two Darfur families arrive safely in Melbourne following intense advocacy between UNHCR Geneva and Chadian agencies.
- > We witnessed the arrival of the Lombok families in Australia after eight years in Indonesia. This was a joint initiative between ASRC Legal and Campaigns Programs working together over three years.

CHALLENGES

With a minority Government and Independents we have opportunities for a change in policy. These will not be achieved easily. There are deeply entrenched community attitudes and political positions to be overcome.

- > Indefinite Mandatory Detention which includes the detention of children and people who have been tortured and those who become mentally ill in detention.
- > The threat of Off-shore Processing and its accompanying denial of legal rights.
- > The undermining of human rights exhibited by the discriminatory treatment of asylum seekers both in the community and in detention.

Supporting Asylum Seekers at Appointments (SASA)

SASA provides practical and moral support for ASRC members when they attend official appointments. SASA aims to help relieve the anxiety and uncertainty many members feel when attending these appointments, many of whom have limited understanding of the processes involved, and limited English.

Members are accompanied to a range of appointments, the most frequent being at the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Other appointments can be at Red Cross, Centrelink, Medicare and various consulates. On occasions SASA volunteers also attend interviews and legal hearings to provide support to asylum seekers within the refugee status determination process.

This financial year saw over 100 members seek assistance from the program, with over 232 appointments conducted over a twelve month period.

SASA Staff



- 0 paid staff
- 26 volunteers

ACHIEVEMENTS

The SASA Program provided a vital legal safety net for vulnerable asylum seekers to ensure they were at all times fairly treated and afforded their basic legal rights when engaging with the refugee legal system

This financial year the SASA Program:

- > Saw a substantial increase in the range of appointments attended.
- > Increased liaison with other ASRC programs, Legal, Casework, Health and Counselling.
- > Improved reporting methods amongst volunteers.
- > Produced a Legal Manual for SASA volunteers.

OUTCOMES

SASA volunteers accompanied asylum seekers on 132 visits to DIAC Compliance, and 49 asylum seekers to lodge applications for protection visas.

CHALLENGES

SASA hopes to further increase the range and number of accompanied visits for members of the ASRC.

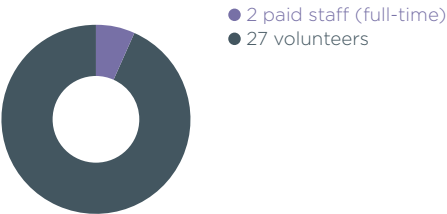
Health

The ASRC Health Program is the largest service of its kind in Australia. We provide a broad range of health services for vulnerable, at risk, community residing asylum seekers. All of the ASRC Health Program services are provided pro bono to our clients, most of who have no income and are on visas denying work rights and Medicare. Their complex health concerns require multiple consultations across a range of health disciplines.

During 2009/2010 we focused on internal ASRC Health Program operations and continued provision of GP and allied health care services to members. In particular, the recruitment and commencement of a new part-time Registered Nurse and full-time Coordinator has provided much needed resources to the program. Health education sessions remained an important element of the ASRC Health Programs, providing information for members on topics as varied as asthma education, Hepatitis B and hand washing. In addition, the ASRC Health Program has continued to provide critical support to the Red Cross, acting as the focal point for medical assessments for ASAS support letters.

The ASRC Health Program also continues to be represented at NasaVIC, the Refugee Health Network, and more recently the Detention Health Advisory Group's Community and Public Health Sub-group networks.

Health Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

The ASRC Health Program led the way in providing a holistic, high quality and inclusive health service that provides a life saving medical safety net while at the same time endeavouring to foster mainstream health pathways and policy change. In 2009/2010, the ASRC Health Program provided over 1100 appointments such as GP, physiotherapy, acupuncture and diabetes education.

- > Seeing the abolition of the 45 day rule and the greater access to Medicare after many years of advocacy. Following this, the successful transitioning of many clients onto Medicare cards and out to community-based GPs and health care was also an achievement.
- > Continuing to provide high-quality, holistic health care to asylum seekers throughout 2009/2010 despite staff shortages. This highlighted the commitment of the entire team of volunteers and the community health nurse to meeting the needs of ASRC Health Program clients and working above and beyond capacity.
- > Developing a solid framework and foundation from which to operate in the coming year. This includes developing a vision for the role of the ASRC Health Program in the provision of asylum seeker health care from clinical management through to community engagement and education, as well as strengthening internal structures and processes.

OUTCOMES

The ASRC Health Program continued to offer a holistic and comprehensive health care program for its members throughout 2009/2010. This included providing GP services on at least four days of the week, as well as massage, physiotherapy, Feldenkrais, shiatsu, acupuncture, diabetes education, nursing services and access to pharmaceuticals.

On average, each month the ASRC Health Program offered around 100 GP, 48 massage, 32 physiotherapy, 16 acupuncture, ten Feldenkrais, six shiatsu and four diabetes education appointments, as well as a drop-in service for nursing assistance and referral. A key program outcome also involved successfully providing access to medication for asylum seekers unable to access either the pharmaceutical benefits scheme or Health Care Card benefits and for whom prescription medications are unaffordable. In the year 2009/2010 the ASRC Health Program spent approximately \$35 000 on pharmaceuticals as well as over \$1000 on optometry support for those unable to pay for the costs of glasses.

The ASRC Health Program is shifting to a Medicare-predominant model following the cessation of the 45 day rule. Successfully transitioning a significant number of clients onto Medicare funded services has been a significant program outcome for 2009/2010. The ASRC Health Program has worked hard to establish clearer pathways for asylum seekers who are Medicare-eligible to be linked in with community-based health care earlier in their determination process, increasing their engagement with mainstream services and making already stretched ASRC Health Program resources more available for Medicare-ineligible asylum seekers.

CHALLENGES

The ASRC Health Program faces the continuing challenge of repositioning itself post the abolition of the 45 day rule, and strives to advocate greater access to Medicare for asylum seekers. This involves broadening perceptions and raising awareness of asylum seeker health issues.

Easing referral pathways to mainstream services where appropriate, and continuing to provide best practice, holistic health care for asylum seekers who are not able to access this elsewhere has also been a main focus of the ASRC Health Program throughout the year. We will continually develop community education and outreach plans to assist in achieving this goal.

Coordinating an effective and professional service with no formal funding or support remains a considerable challenge for the ASRC Health Program.

Casework

The ASRC Casework Program is the only casework program that supports asylum seekers throughout every stage of the refugee determination process and beyond. The program aims to assist asylum seekers to ensure their time seeking asylum is as meaningful as possible regardless of the outcome of their asylum claim. This is done by encouraging asylum seekers to engage in relevant services to achieve their individual goals.

Throughout the year, the Casework Program has continued to strengthen its volunteer base to ensure that every asylum seeker who attends the ASRC is allocated a caseworker to support them with their individual and ongoing needs.

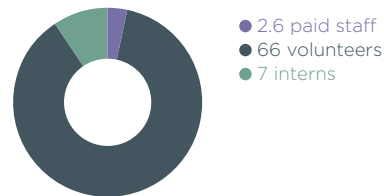
The Casework Program has continued to develop and update the internal database providing up to date and relevant information to services within the ASRC and providing the statistics to support lobbying efforts within the sector.

Continued development and investment in partnerships with other welfare agencies have resulted in strengthening access for asylum seekers to other relevant services. For example, participation in the NASAVic housing coalition has resulted in greater access to housing services and supporting material aid programs and lobbying state government has resulted in travel concession cards for asylum seekers.

In 2009/2010 the Casework Program supported 395 new members/families, providing on average 40 structured appointments per week. The Casework Program also provides hundreds of both formal and informal consultation to the other ASRC, asylum seeker sector and mainstream welfare services each week. This important function ensures that by providing valuable and relevant information to these services can ensure the best possible service outcome to each asylum seeker.

All ASRC members have an allocated caseworker at the ASRC. The casework program currently supports approximately 940 members, with each volunteer working with approximately 15–20 members each in a primary or secondary capacity.

Casework Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

In staying true to the ASRC's core founding principle of 'turn no asylum seeker away' the ASRC Casework Program provided a genuinely accessible crisis and welfare service. Time and time again we had asylum seekers present hungry, homeless and traumatised and in every situation no one left the ASRC without food for the week, a roof over their head for the night and a way forward.

- > **Increased volunteer recruitment and retention:** Volunteer capacity is such that each asylum seeker is now allocated a caseworker. The Casework Program is currently assisting over 900 clients in a primary/secondary casework capacity assisting with a wide range of welfare issues, especially housing.
- > **Advocacy:** The Casework Program continues to advocate for asylum seekers to gain access to relevant and necessary services at a micro and macro level. The NASAVic housing coalition is one example of the ongoing efforts to educate the mainstream sector for asylum seekers to gain access to these valuable services.

Human Rights Law

In February 2010 Chanelle and Sherrine spoke at the State Parliament to The Family and Community Development Committee to provide evidence at the Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Public Housing. This invitation to present in relation to the needs of asylum seekers builds further on the release of the ASRC housing paper from the previous financial year, and highlights recognition of the expertise of the casework.

> **Partnerships:** Over the 2009/2010 period the Casework Program has continued to make linkages and forge new connections with asylum seeker-specific and mainstream services, long with the amazing support of the Aid and Advocacy Program.

In addition to regularly meeting new services, on the 17 November 2009 the ASRC Casework Program organised an open day to highlight the suite of services available at the ASRC. Over 100 people from many different services attended and many ASRC services have been able to create new partnerships and nurture ongoing relationships with many asylum seeker-specific and mainstream welfare services, resulting in greater access for asylum seekers.

CHALLENGES

The Casework Program faces constant challenges within the welfare sector due to inadequate and outdated information in relation to asylum seekers. This problem poses a blockade to access towards mainstream welfare services for those seeking asylum and will continue as a main focus in the 2010/2011 financial year. It is hoped that the further development of relevant partnerships will translate to greater access to more mainstream services and ensure better long term outcomes for all asylum seekers

The Human Rights Law Program provides a robust, independent, free legal service to uphold the human rights of asylum seekers. We legally assist and represent people through each stage of the refugee status determination process. Via a team of over 90 volunteers and a handful of paid solicitors we provide more than 20 000 hours of free legal help annually. Our Law Program also engages in policy and law reform, and campaigns for social justice for asylum seekers.

In 2009/2010 the Law Program has seen a completely new legal team take the reins, provided an exciting opportunity for a regeneration of the program.

The focus of the Law Program during the year was:

- > Ensuring all asylum seekers were full represented at each stage of the legal process.
- > Lobbying the federal government for reform of the refugee status determination process.
- > Supporting the refugee sector to be better able to respond to the legal needs of asylum seekers by providing free training to NGOs and pro bono barristers.
- > Providing specialist legal advice and assistance to women at risk of gender-based persecution.

Throughout the year specialist teams were developed within the program to help volunteers develop their skills in particular areas, with specialist casework, vulnerable women, submissions, paralegal and legal admin teams being established.

> In 2009/2010 we case **managed over 1000 asylum seekers**, including 395 new cases.

Human Rights Law Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

The Human Rights Law Program's greatest achievement was providing a quality legal service that turned no asylum seeker in need away. We provide quick, ethical and responsive legal assistance to asylum seekers who are otherwise unrepresented. The ASRC's Law Program continued to pioneer a holistic model of legal practice that incorporated counsellors and welfare workers into its coalface delivery of legal services.

- > We won **83.1%** of all new legal cases taken on at the primary stage.
- > We ran **284 active cases**, representing over 450 people.
- > **We won asylum for more than 200 asylum seekers**, representing 83% at the primary stage of the refugee process. The total number of people for whom we have gained asylum since 2001 rose to over 1500.
- > **We lobbied for an overhaul of the refugee legal system** by releasing our policy position paper entitled 'A Case For Justice' which highlighted the serious flaws in the current refugee determination process.
- > **We trained and mentored law students and junior lawyers to become human rights advocates** in our Law Program. We had five volunteer intakes and during this time took in 70 new legal volunteers into the Program.

- > **We lobbied as part of the national coalition of organisations in the 'Right to Work' campaign for the end of the 45 day rule.** We were one of the first organisations in Australia to start campaigning on these issues over seven years ago. In September 2009 we saw the end of this rule and a significant gain in the right to work for asylum seekers.

CHALLENGES

The Law Program continues to be completely unfunded. This presents an ongoing challenge to the Program in terms of maintaining adequate staffing levels.

Women's cases will continue to remain a significant challenge in the year ahead as the program sees more and more single women with gender-based claims presenting to the program.

A new Minister for Immigration will inevitably result in some changes to law and policy which the program will need to remain responsive to with limited resources.

A growing population of detainees onshore may result in increased work load for the ASRC. A case currently being decided by the high court will determine whether or not detainees processed offshore will be granted access to the courts and judicial review. If offshore applicants are granted access to the courts, this has potential to significantly increase the ASRC's legal practice and potentially brings with it a host of challenges associated with assisting a greater number of people in detention.

- > In 2009/2010 we **legally assisted over 450 asylum seekers** from 56 countries, winning asylum for 83% at the primary stage of the refugee process.

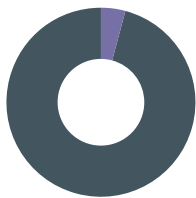
Counselling

The ASRC Counselling Program provides specialist pro bono counselling and mental health services for asylum seekers who are experiencing high levels of psychological distress. Our clients' stories are ones of unthinkable persecution, war, torture or trauma and the psychological/psychiatric problems range from mild to severe. We provide programs and services that help children, young people, adults and families develop opportunities for renewal, strengthening, building healthy relationships, and connectedness within their new communities.

We provide psychiatric care through an experienced psychiatrist and refer suicidal clients to CATT when necessary. Concurrently we offer support for clients and volunteers at the Wednesday evening legal clinic and run monthly fun activities for families through our successful KidsZone program.

Over 300 asylum seekers benefitted from the services of the ASRC's Counselling Program in the last financial year.

Counselling Staff



- 2.6 paid staff
- 58 volunteers

ACHIEVEMENTS

Through its provision of both short and long-term counselling to survivors of torture and trauma, the Counselling Program provided an empowering and safe space for asylum seekers to be able to rebuild their shattered lives. Its greatest achievement was being able to provide over 2000 counselling sessions to at-risk asylum seekers for the year in a timely and culturally appropriate manner.

- > Supporting asylum seekers in distress with counselling to keep them safe, with many clients showing increased levels of complexity, high distress and suicidality.
- > Developing an enhanced Professional Development program, including comprehensive induction programs for new volunteers and access to external supervisors for counselling staff and volunteers.
- > Successful completion of first round of interviews and initial results by PhD researcher with supervising psychiatrist, working with asylum seekers who have experienced depression and the effects of demoralisation from the long refugee status determination process.

OUTCOMES

With limited resources and limited governmental support for such services, our program worked tirelessly to deliver mental health services to a growing number of distressed and vulnerable clients, demoralised by the long threatening process of asylum.

CHALLENGES

Mental health issues are the greatest challenge the Counselling Program faces, as many asylum seekers threatened with deportation are fearful and greatly distressed at the prospect of repatriation, some of who become suicidal. Greater funding and support for these issues will be sought throughout the coming year.

-
- > In 2009/2010 we provided **over 100 hours of counselling services a week**—of which 60% was delivered by volunteers.
-

Empowerment

Employment—ASSET
Social and Community Development
ASRC Catering Service
English as a Second Language
Home English Teaching

“

without my home
english teacher
I think I would have no
confidence
to talk to anyone

”

Employment—ASSET

Asylum Seeker Service for Employment and Training (ASSET) is a pioneer of asylum seeker employment and education services in Australia. Since it began in 2004, it has assisted over 600 asylum seekers in all areas of employment and training.

Throughout this financial year, ASSET's four Units (Employment Casework, Education and Training, ASSET Cleaning Link and Employer Partnerships) have worked together to produce the most successful outcomes for asylum seeker clients since the program's inception in 2004. Thanks to the hard working ASSET team, solid pathways now exist for asylum seekers to gain education and paid work.

ASSET has advocated strongly towards the Australian Government to change policies that prevent asylum seekers from accessing employment and education. As a result, the ASRC's CEO, Kon Karapanagiotidis, now sits on a community advisory group for Skills Victoria. ASSET also began a project in partnership with the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA).

This financial year, ASSET has assisted over 300 asylum seekers in seeking employment opportunities.

ACHIEVEMENTS

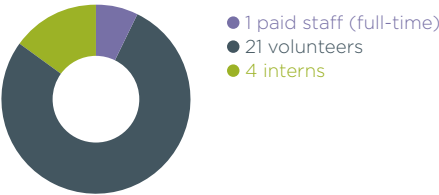
ASSET's greatest achievement was in creating opportunities for over 100 asylum seekers to join the mainstream workforce. The Employment Program's education, partnership building and lobby work raised employers' awareness of, and confidence in, the invaluable skills and abilities that asylum seekers have to offer their workplace.

This financial year ASSET:

- > Placed 100 asylum seekers into paid work.
- > Developed employment partnerships with more than 30 local businesses.
- > Secured over 100 fee waiver positions with TAFEs and other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

> In 2009/2010 we secured **over 200 employment and education opportunities** through our Employment Service and Catering social enterprise.

Employment Staff



Social and Community Development

The Social and Community Development Program exists to improve the quality of life for asylum seekers. The Program focuses on providing asylum seekers with a place to be expressive, inspirational and generate positive energy. Ultimately, the Program builds citizenship by enabling asylum seekers to fully contribute to society.

The Social and Community Development Programs aim to achieve the following outcomes for asylum seekers:

- > Foster empowerment, resilience, independence, self sufficiency and contribution of asylum seekers.
- > Improve engagement, integration and connection to community and mainstream services.
- > Develop skills, knowledge, talents, creativity and strengths of asylum seekers.
- > Encourage a sense of belonging and connectedness, and improve loneliness, social isolation and mental health of asylum seekers.

In the past year, the major activities and achievements of the Social and Community Development Empowerment Programs are:

- > **Orientation Program**—provided hundreds of tours of the CBD and local areas to asylum seekers and linked 70 asylum seekers with YMCA gym memberships.
- > **Mentor Program**—matched 100 pairs of mentors and mentees.
- > **Arts Program**—18 asylum seekers and refugees came to the stage for the first time in Australian history, and performed seven times for Australian audiences, telling their stories and advocating for the global plight of asylum seekers and refugees.
- > **Women's Group**—100 women attended the Women's group.

The Social and Community Development Program has assisted over 300 asylum seekers and their families throughout the financial year.

Social and Community Development Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

- > The success of theatrical production *Journey of Asylum—Waiting*, which was launched by Minister for Energy, Resources and the Arts, Peter Batchelor and presented by Australian of the Year, Professor Patrick McGorry.
- > Improved mental health, engagement with services and connectedness to community, for asylum seeker mentees.
- > Asylum seekers now have statewide access to gym, swim and fitness classes through the YMCA Open Doors program.

CHALLENGES

The major challenge for the year ahead will be to source funding and resources to sustain the Social and Community Development programs.

-
- > In 2009/2010 we staged a **sell-out theatrical production** *Journey of Asylum—Waiting*, involving 22 asylum seekers and launched by Minister for Energy and Resources and the Arts, Peter Batchelor, and Australian of the Year, Patrick McGorry.
-

ASRC Catering Service

ASRC Catering is a social enterprise established by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to employ asylum seekers who have the right and capacity to work. All surplus funds generated from the catering business go towards supporting asylum seekers who do not have the right to work and are unable to access federal government services.

ASRC Catering enjoyed unprecedented success throughout the 2009/2010 financial year, catering for over 250 prestigious events around Melbourne, and providing a number of asylum seekers with employment opportunities. Clients thus far have included the Wheeler Centre, Melbourne City Library, the Greens and Amnesty International.

As there is no external advertising used, the phenomenal success of ASRC Catering is attributed solely to word of mouth endorsements; an amazing outcome considering Melbourne's competitive market.

ASRC Catering Service Staff



- > Business expansion has meant ASRC Catering has relocated to a much larger premise.
- > Significant increase in turnover and profitability.
- > Word of mouth and return business continued to drive the success of ASRC Catering throughout 2009/2010.

Outcomes

Eight of our staff have received Permanent Visas, and have then successfully sought work.

CHALLENGES

In the coming year ASRC Catering is hoping to develop a small product range to sell both in the ASRC shop and eventually in retail stores around Melbourne. This would not only provide customers with delicious food products but also raise awareness of the ASRC. Currently we sell a range of three spices, and Preserved Lemons when in season, through the ASRC shop.

ASRC Catering provides take-away meals which are sold from the ASRC shop. We endeavour to secure enough sales from this enterprise to give more consistent work to asylum seekers and refugees.

The ASRC has recently employed both a Marketing Manager and Philanthropic Engagement Coordinator. It is our hope that by working with these two managers we will be able to increase job opportunities and in turn offer more consistent hours to the Catering Service's asylum seeker staff.

English as a Second Language (ESL) and Home English Teaching (HET)

Without English our members are handicapped throughout their daily survival, and in their ability to plead their case for asylum, access resources and (for those with work rights) to seek employment. ASRC's English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are taught throughout the working week, with learners provided with high quality tuition in English on any given day. In addition, the program has recently established a ten-week course for ASRC members hoping to be granted work rights. The course focuses on learning about the vocabulary and culture of the Australian workplace.

In our every day English classes, teachers focus on relevance and classes for beginners include topics such as:

- > Survival English.
- > How to get around—Melbourne and Australia.
- > Using public transport.
- > Dealing effectively with bureaucracies, e.g. meetings, form completion, attending hospitals, doctors etc.

Classes average 10–15 learners each morning, with some learners seeking lessons more than once a day. The Program received approximately 50 new students between January and June 2010. In addition, many students returned from the previous year.

Within the ESL Program, the ASRC offers Home English Teaching, an outreach program which caters especially for members who live in outer suburbs or are otherwise unable to come into the Centre for regular classes. Some 55 asylum seekers benefit from the Home English Teaching Program at any one time, 70 if including family members.

- > Provision of high quality, creative and interesting English tuition to ASRC members every weekday morning, offered by a team of experienced teachers.
- > Establishment of a new course, Workplace English, to assist ASRC members to become familiar with conversation and culture in the Australian workplace, and to be prepared to confidently enter the workforce when work rights are granted. The steady enrolments and excellent quality of this course have been major achievements.
- > Several specialist volunteer teachers working individually with a small number of advanced learners, to prepare them for entry to specific tertiary education courses in mainstream educational institutions.

CHALLENGES

The ESL Program hopes to reduce the problem of member immobility in the upcoming financial year. Members frequently mention they would attend classes more regularly if there were more public transport options available to them. As many students struggle financially, especially when faced with a legal blockade to a right to work, a free Metcard is their only chance to attend classes.

A major goal of the ESL Program is also to gain sufficient funding to employ a full-time coordinator in the new year, to continue the incredible work of the ESL and HET Coordinators, who have worked tirelessly as volunteer Program Coordinators for many years.

ESL and HET Staff



ACHIEVEMENTS

Community

Corporate and Philanthropic Engagement
Marketing, Fundraising and Communications
Volunteer Support

“

asylum seekers are our

invisible **heroes,**
willing to risk

their **own lives** to make
the world a better place

”



Corporate and Philanthropic Engagement

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILANTHROPY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Philanthropy

Our work and achievements in the last financial year could not have been possible without the ongoing generosity and support of our philanthropic and corporate partners. It is through their support that we have grown to what we are today.

In the last financial year, we had over 30 philanthropic foundations and trusts support our work. These foundations and trusts, together with community supporters, contributed to 95% of our income.

In particular, we want to acknowledge the contribution of our philanthropic partners who have supported us over a number of years by providing multiple-year funding. This enables us to have confidence to invest in expanding and optimising some of our critical programs and to deliver our services more effectively in response to the needs of asylum seekers in our community. It has also enabled consolidation of our core work and the stability to develop a new three-year strategic plan.

Partnerships

This year, the ASRC was supported by six new partnerships bringing the number of corporate partners supporting our centre to a total of 13. Corporate partners supported the centre in a number of ways:

- > **Corporate volunteering**—providing an opportunity for corporate staff to work alongside ASRC volunteers and meet asylum seekers in our Foodbank and Community Meals Programs.
- > **Financial contributions**—helping us deliver our direct programs.
- > **In-kind support**—provisioning much needed goods and services to the ASRC.
- > **Workplace giving programs**—linking corporate staff to our services through regular donations.

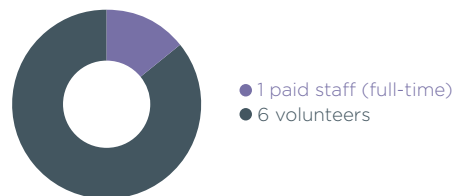
We are very grateful for the support of our corporate partners. These partnerships with ASRC not only demonstrate our partner's corporate social responsibility, but also a commitment to human rights and support of some of the most marginalised members in our community.

The year ahead

In the coming year our keys aims are to:

- > Further diversify our income streams to promote greater self sustainability as an organisation. We aim to do this through expanding our social enterprises in catering and cleaning, roll out a large scale workplace giving scheme and promote greater individual giving for the ASRC.
- > Build on our corporate partnerships to maximise employment opportunities for asylum seekers, greater community awareness and increase direct, and in-kind, support for the ASRC.
- > Maintain existing philanthropic partnerships and develop new philanthropic relationships to ensure we have a sufficient procurement pipeline for seed funding of our new services and expansion of current critical direct services.

Corporate and Philanthropic Engagement Staff



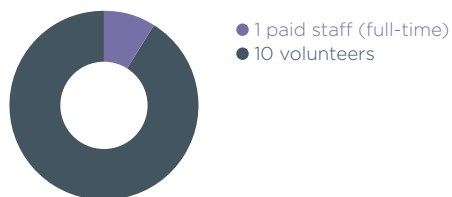
Marketing, Fundraising and Communications

The ASRC Marketing Program is responsible for achieving financial sustainability for the ASRC and changing community attitudes towards asylum seekers. One of the main aims of the Marketing Program is to generate income and create sustainable social and policy change in regards to asylum seekers through campaigning, media exposure and community engagement activities.

The ASRC employed a new Marketing Manager in 2010 to focus on solidifying, expanding and diversifying income for the ASRC and to ensure that marketing activities result in income, awareness raising and attitude change. In the past six months, the Marketing Program has grown to welcome ten volunteers (including member volunteers) and focused on introducing marketing, fundraising and communication strategies to achieve the goals of the program.

The greatest achievements of the Marketing Program in 2009/2010 have been the success of this year's annual winter appeal, launch of the new ASRC website, increase in community fundraisers, impact of the ASRC's election campaign, social enterprise shop sales, an increase in positive media coverage and doubling the income generated by the ASRC's annual Run for Refugees event. A major focus for the Marketing Program in the coming year will be to develop strategies to further diversify the ASRC's income (and ensure financial sustainability) and achieve greater community engagement and change in community attitudes towards asylum seekers.

Marketing, Fundraising and Communications Staff



Volunteer Support

As a volunteer-driven organisation, the ASRC's Volunteer Support Program enables the ASRC's 25 programs to operate and deliver their services to asylum seekers. At present we have over 600 active volunteers providing direct services to ASRC members.

Volunteer Support Staff



The ASRC employed a new Volunteer Coordinator in 2010. With fresh energy and direction, the Volunteer Support Program achieved the following in the past year:

- > We conducted an audit of all volunteers across every ASRC program. The result is that we now have a reliable central database with up to date records, which will be extremely beneficial for marketing, fundraising and efficient volunteer management.
- > The ASRC's Volunteer Program was selected as a finalist in the Premier's Community Volunteering Awards in 2009 in the Innovation category. This award recognises organisations that 'think outside of the square' in terms of their volunteer program.

OUTCOMES

Training and Development

We ran 12 professional development sessions for volunteers. This year four of these sessions focused on working with people with mental health issues, in response to feedback from volunteers about needing further support in this area.

Student Placements

Each year, the ASRC receives an enormous amount of interest from universities and students seeking internships. The Volunteer Support Program screens and interviews these applicants and this year successfully placed students into various programs.

Information Evenings

We conducted five information evenings, with 580 members of the public attending in total. Not only are these evenings important to recruit new volunteers, they are a powerful tool to provide community education.

Inductions

Throughout the year, 310 people completed the Volunteer Induction Program. As a result, the centre has over 600 active volunteers placed across all programs.

Volunteer Recruitment

We continued to use volunteer websites, universities and professional networks to fill key volunteer roles which remain unfilled following the general volunteer intakes.

Volunteer Program Staffing

We now have a team of seven volunteers who assist the Volunteer Coordinator with the day-to-day running of the program, including assistance with the recruitment process, volunteer induction evenings, ongoing program administration and support for volunteers across all programs.

CHALLENGES

In the coming year, the Volunteer Support Program will focus on targeted recruitment, undertaking a restructure of the volunteer screening and intake process, strengthen the training content of volunteer induction, and streamline the Program's administrative processes. These areas of focus will help overcome challenges such as sustainable and effective volunteer recruitment, management and retention.

In the second half of 2009, in conjunction with the Social and Community Development Program, a member volunteer program for ASRC was trialed within the centre. Through this pilot we learned that while the benefits are significant, this program also needs strong ongoing support. The Volunteer Coordinator will increase to full-time and take on the responsibility of managing a newly created Member Participation Program within the ASRC. A strong focus will be placed upon enabling asylum seekers to increase vocational skills and gain Australian workplace experience, as well as raising community awareness, through asylum seeker participation in community education and awareness-raising activities.

> In 2009/2010 we **grew our volunteer staff** to over 600 active volunteers who provided 2000 hours of assistance per week (the equivalent of 58 full-time staff).



Sustainability

Operations

Administration

IT

Finance

“

our IT and

Administration

Programs consist entirely of

volunteers

”

Operations

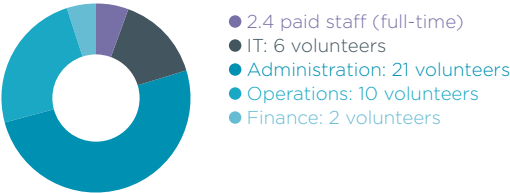
The ASRC's Operations Program incorporates Administration, Information Technology, Finance and Operations. In 2009/2010, these programs continued supporting the needs of asylum seekers with over 35 volunteers giving thousands of hours of support. Our IT and Administration Programs consist entirely of volunteers, reinforcing how important volunteers are to our day-to-day operations.

The Administration Program, which includes all reception duties, is where it all begins for people visiting or calling the ASRC. The team does an amazing job, presenting in an upbeat and professional manner, as the first point of call in supporting, referring and directing asylum seekers with a near infinite array of needs. With this same unflappable spirit they are also the telephonic and physical first point of contact for other welfare organisations, the media, politicians, the general public, potential volunteers etc.

The IT Program provides, and maintains, computing services, including over 100 computers, the internet and printers used by members, staff and volunteers. Members use our computers on a daily basis for internet access, communicating with family and friends, word processing, study and job seeking. Staff and volunteers rely heavily on the IT systems for research, communicating, data storage and the other essential tasks which keep their programs running smoothly.

The Finance Program maintains the ASRC accounts (payable, receivable and payroll systems). In addition, they provide financial reporting against program budgets and monitor the ASRC's finances. Over the previous 12 months the Finance team engaged in an independent review of their financial systems and procedures to ensure the Centre remains transparent and accountable. This all helps to safeguard the financial sustainability of the ASRC.

Operations Staff



Financial Report

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2010

	2010	2009
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Fundraising events income	427,345	348,480
Donations	592,627	579,919
Merchandise sales	29,624	58,648
Sponsorship and grants	1,057,758	1,029,168
Miscellaneous income	7,825	4,244
	2,115,179	2,020,459
EXPENDITURE		
Program expenses	368,579	314,240
Administration	379,447	294,822
Employment expenses	1,292,537	1,203,986
Fundraising activity costs	122,507	148,426
	2,163,070	1,961,474
Operating profit	(47,891)	58,985
Interest income	67,090	84,790
Profit before income tax	19,199	143,775
Income tax expense	—	—
Profit after income tax	19,199	143,775
Retained Profits at the beginning of the financial year	841,135	697,360
Retained profits at the end of the financial year	860,334	841,135

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES STATEMENT 30 JUNE 2010

	2010	2009
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	1,400,262	1,710,899
Trade and other receivables	78,640	49,937
Inventories	29,579	56,115
Total Current Assets	1,508,481	1,816,951
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	36,051	35,607
Total non-current assets	36,051	35,607
Total Assets	1,544,532	1,852,558
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Amounts received in advance	526,846	834,952
Trade and other creditors	76,893	91,693
Provisions	63,750	70,718
Total current liabilities	667,489	997,363
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	16,709	14,060
Total non-current liabilities	16,709	14,060
Total liabilities	684,198	1,011,423
Net assets	860,334	841,135
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Retained profits	860,334	841,135
Total members' funds	860,334	841,135

These abridged financial statements are prepared from the full audited financial statements. A detailed copy of the audited financial statements are available on request.

Thank you for your ongoing support

The ASRC acknowledges the major support of the following people and organisations since opening our doors:

Andyinc Foundation | ANZ Charitable Trusts | AR Capital Management | Australia Council for the Arts | Australian Ethical Investments | Becher Foundation | Bell Charitable Fund | Bennelong Foundation | Bokhara Foundation | Brencorp Foundation | Brockhoff Foundation | Centre For Multicultural Youth Issues | Circus Oz | City of Melbourne | City West Water | Collier Charitable Fund | Colonial Foundation | Community Foundation Network | Coronella Fund | Curlew Fund | Danks Trust | Department of Human Services | Department of Planning and Community Development | Department of Transport | FareShare | Felton Bequest | Forest Hill Foundation (Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies) | Fouress Foundation | Freehills | General Practice Victoria | Helen Macpherson Smith Trust | Hoffman Foundation | Jawatt Family Trust | Legal Services Board | Lonely Planet | Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation | Mallesons Stephens Jacques | Maree and David Shelmerdine | Mary Potter Trust Foundation | Melbourne Community Foundation | Mercy Foundation | Minter Ellison | Newsboys Foundation | Palmera Projects | Parks Victoria | Pilotlight | Ray & Margaret Wilson Foundation | Readings | River Capital | Rural Australians for Refugees | Scanlon Foundation | SecondBite | Shine On Foundation | Sisters of Charity | State Trustees | StreetSmart | Sunshine Foundation | Stephen Roberts | Telstra Consumer Affairs | The Cubit Family Foundation | The Felton Bequests Committee | The Fred P. Archer Charitable Trust | The Myer Foundation | The Panel Christmas Wrap | The R.E. Ross Trust | VicRelief Foodbank | Victoria Council of Social Services | Victoria Law Foundation | Victorian Bar Legal Assistance Scheme | Victorian Multicultural Commission | Victorian State Government | Victorian Women's Trust | William Angliss Charitable Trust | William Buckland Foundation | Wise Employment | Women's Circle



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